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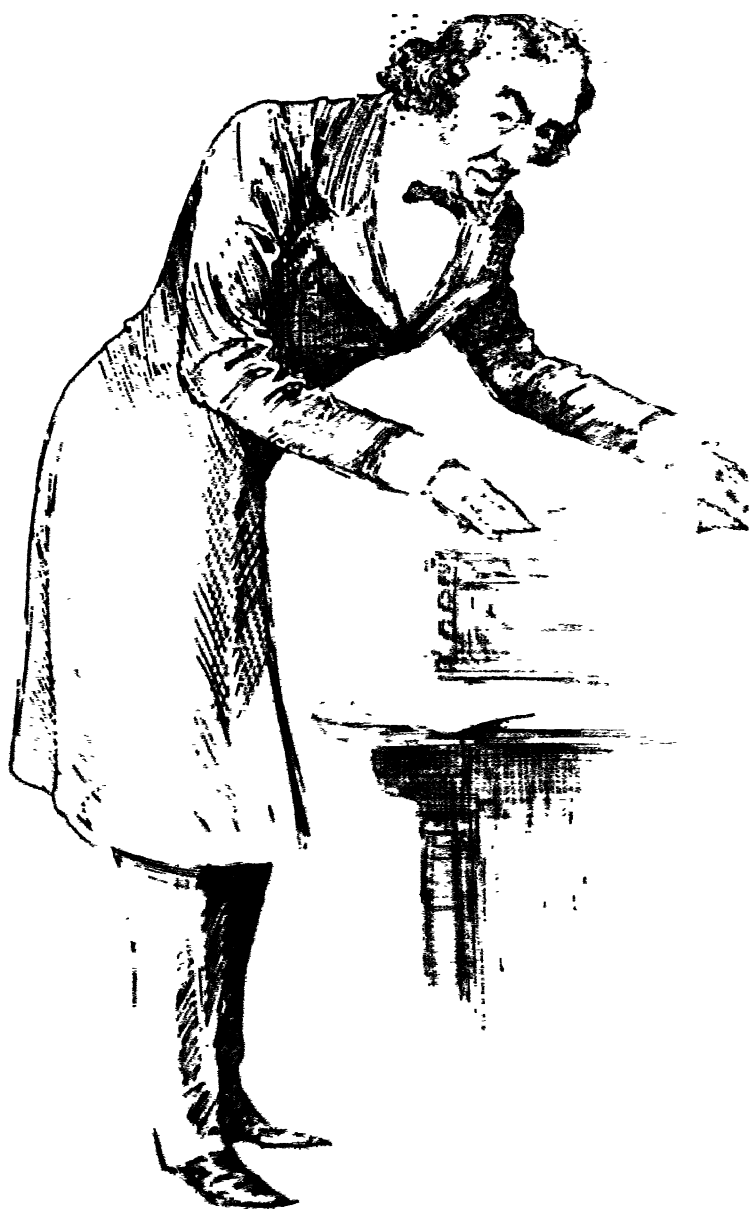








**SOME VICTORIAN MEN**



# SOME VICTORIAN MEN

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY

HARRY FURNISS

AUTHOR OF  
"SOME VICTORIAN  
WOMEN"



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## PREFACE

SO much has already been written of this period that only one reason can justify this work, that of fresh survey of old scenes from an entirely different point of view. An age of striking personalities lends itself, fortunately, to innumerable presentations. Mine, of course, is that of an artist, and I must depend on my pencil to "make good" the deficiencies of my pen.

1924



## CONTENTS

PARTER	PAGE
I. POWTER IN POLITICS . . . . .	1
II. THE DAY OF ORATORS . . . . .	15
III. THE TYPE-VICTORIAN . . . . .	21
IV. A FEW PERSONALITIES IN DIFFERENT SPHERES . . . . .	31
V. ECCENTRIC LONDONERS . . . . .	44
VI. PUNNETS AND PEACOCKAL JOKES . . . . .	56
VII. SOME VICTORIAN STAFFS . . . . .	67
VIII. SOME CURIOUS FINANCIAL PERSONALITIES . . . . .	83
IX. SOME PARLIAMENTARY WITS . . . . .	105
X. THE POLICE : A GREAT VICTORIAN INSTITUTION . . . . .	112
XI. CHAPLAIN AND LORD CHANCELLORS . . . . .	134
XII. A FEW GREAT ACTORS . . . . .	143
XIII. THE MUSIC-HALL . . . . .	155
XIV. SINGLE-HANDED ENTERTAINERS . . . . .	163
XV. THE VICTORIAN PLATFORM . . . . .	174
XVI. CHARLES DICKENS—AS AN ACTOR . . . . .	183
XVII. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN . . . . .	201
XVIII. BENJAMIN DISRAELI—EARL OF BEACONSFIELD . . . . .	209
XIX. MR. GLADSTONE—ACTOR AND ORATOR . . . . .	222





## ILLUSTRATIONS

BENJAMIN DE RAILLÉ . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
LEOPD MORTLEY . . . . .	FACING PAGE 6
REVEREND W. F. FORD, M.A. . . . .	10
SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT . . . . .	12
LORD IPPLINGHAM . . . . .	14
GEORGE THOMPSON . . . . .	16
JOHN RUSKIN . . . . .	18
AMOS NORTON . . . . .	20
AMOS ANTHONY TROTT . . . . .	22
ALBERTUS THOMPSON . . . . .	24
VICTORIAN SURRENDER . . . . .	26
CHARLES DARWIN . . . . .	28
FRANCIS J. JOWETT . . . . .	30
SIR LAW HOLLIS . . . . .	32
JAMES SEAVY, FOUNDER OF MILLER'S STUDIO . . . . .	34
ANTHONY TROTT . . . . .	38
HAROLD L. . . . .	46
CHARLES GARNETT . . . . .	52
"MR. SPENCER" THOMPSON . . . . .	54
SIR GEORGE ROSE . . . . .	58
THE AUCTION SCENE . . . . .	60
"THE GONG" "HIS MASTER'S VOICE" . . . . .	62
PAUL MURPHY . . . . .	64
JOHN RUSKIN AND WHISTLER . . . . .	70
DR. FURNIVALL . . . . .	74
JOHN CARROLL . . . . .	76
ALFRED SWINBURNE . . . . .	80
HARVEY BARNARD . . . . .	94
WILLIAM WRIGHT . . . . .	96
HERNOLD OSBORNE . . . . .	106

SIR RICHARD MAYNE . . . . .	112
SIR JOHN HENDERSON . . . . .	114
SIR ROBERT ANDERSON . . . . .	116
CANON WILBERFORCE . . . . .	120
VISCOUNT HALSBURY . . . . .	134
IRVING AS BICKLE . . . . .	144
SAMUEL PHELPS'S FAREWELL . . . . .	149
"DUNDREARY" SOTHERN . . . . .	152
JACK RYDER . . . . .	152
THE KING OF CARMEN . . . . .	154
FOX . . . . .	155
DAN LING'S CARD . . . . .	155
THE OLD ROYAL . . . . .	157
WOODIN . . . . .	157
HENRY RUSSELL . . . . .	159
ARTHUR SMITH . . . . .	161
GEORGE GEORGE SMITH . . . . .	162
SIR ROBERT BAILL . . . . .	165
ANDREW LANG . . . . .	165
CHARLES DICKENS . . . . .	
HEAD . . . . .	166
AT REHEARSAL . . . . .	167
READING . . . . .	167
EXHAUSTED . . . . .	168
MAKING A SPEECH . . . . .	168
JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN . . . . .	169
DEBBIE ADVERTISING THE FIRM . . . . .	170
RIGHT HON. W. F. GEARHOLM . . . . .	
LISTENING . . . . .	170
LEAVING OVER BOX ON TABLE . . . . .	171

**SOME VICTORIAN MEN**



# SOME VICTORIAN MEN

## CHAPTER I

### POWERS IN POLITICS

THERE were some great Victorian men who did not appreciate the era in which they lived. Lord Morley was one. He was a Little Englander, in other words he was anti-British. In Ireland, in India and elsewhere, he worked "agin the government" and thus set himself the task of breaking up the Empire. No doubt he believed he was in the right. "Honest John" he was called, and as Honest John he was known to many. He was not the only "Honest John." John Burns, of a different stratum of mentality, was also opposed to war, to controlling influence of all kinds. Indeed, it is curious to observe how Johns become "honest," but never Toms, Dicks or Harrys. Despite his politics, John Morley was honest; he was also great in literature with his Edmund Burke, Cobden, Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot, to say nothing of an exhaustive life of his political master, Gladstone.

As an editor he wielded a powerful influence. The *Pall Mall Gazette* under him was the best-written paper of the day. In the editorial chair he was a martinet, and when he travelled he did not shed his editorial martinetship.

W. T. Stead was his assistant on the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and he records that some of the notes written by Mr. Morley when away from home, to his assistant, were both interesting and entertaining. Here is one dated August, 1881 :

“ By the divinities I beseech you not to let D—— or anybody else talk about ‘ their Lordships.’ If it is irony it’s very poor ; if it’s serious it’s very vulgar.”

Another, sent in the same month, expresses concern at “ the washy ending of the article on Friday on Coercion.” Whilst a third, written a month later, contains this bomb-shell for the acting editor :

“ Your article to-night turned my hair grey.”

Lord Morley was one of the most difficult subjects for the caricaturist. His clean, cold intellectual features were almost impossible to represent—or rather misrepresent. He was more easily “ drawn ” by conversation than by pencil. He always looked the picture of solemnity in the House of Commons. Responsibility seemed to weigh upon him. His very gait was peculiar. His hat well down on his head, hands clasped behind his back, he walked across the lobby of the House, with slow, measured, lengthened strides, exactly as if he were measuring the lobby for a carpet. No prominent politician has been less written of in current periodicals. As a matter of fact, he was not good copy for the pen or the pencil, for which, no doubt, he felt much gratitude.

To refresh my memory, I will now dip into my diary, that has several references to Morley’s introduction to the House, beginning in the year eighteen hundred and eighty-three.

1883, *Feb.* Agnew (Sir William Agnew, M.P., one of

the Proprietors of *Punch*) waxed very loquacious at the *Punch* dinner last evening concerning John Morley's triumph at Newcastle. Agnew disagreed profoundly with the prevailing impression of the Table, that Morley would be out of his element in Parliament and had far better keep to literature. He gave us a long tirade, to the effect that it was he—Agnew—who persuaded Morley to take an active part in politics. John was miserably conscious of his shortcomings. He said that he had not the nerve for public speaking, he would never be a success and failure was absolutely certain. But Agnew refused to listen. He insisted that John could speak, and, what was more, Agnew could force him to speak. And on that supposition Agnew escorted John Morley to a political meeting in his own constituency. John was not good, Agnew admitted, for he was horribly nervous, but Agnew led the applause and John seemed pleased.

1883, *Feb. 28th.* *Punch* dinner last night, Lucy ("Toby M.P.") was very excited about Morley taking his place in the House. He had, so Lucy says, an enthusiastic reception, and every one predicts that he will be a great personality in Parliament. I suggested a small drawing for the "Essence of Parliament"—Morley as "the Member who could speak *fortnightly*." Lucy says, however, that he has advised John Morley not to speak for a year, or, at least until the House gets accustomed to him, and he to the House. (Sound advice) - Moreover, Morley gave up the editorship of *The Fortnightly* last October!

1884, *May 13th.* John Morley, after listening and watching for more than a year, spoke in the House for



the first time. He was barely heard, and certainly not understood by the Press Gallery. Great excitement among the Pressmen, but proportionately great disappointment. His delivery is bad, his articulation indistinct, he seems to gargle words somewhere down in his throat. It was a thousand pities, as his matter was excellent, epigrammatic and well phrased—so we learn when reading his speech in the newspapers. His is not an easy subject for my pencil. His bright red socialistic tie is the only conspicuous thing about him, though the curious shape of his nose suggests possibilities.

1890, *March*. On my way to St. James's I called to see Beerbohm Tree at the Haymarket Theatre. When I was leaving up drove a hansom, and (to my surprise) out got Joe Chamberlain and John Morley and entered the Theatre. I mentioned this fact to George Alexander. He said the two often came to St. James's Theatre together. One evening Chamberlain brought Morley "round" and introduced him to Alexander. They seemed to be great friends.

1893, *Sept. 9th*. The discussion on the Home Rule Bill came to an end last night. When the division was taken a sigh of relief went round St. Stephen's at the thought that we should be free, for a time at least, from the Home Rule Bill. The curtain was a poor one. In fact, the whole of the last act dragged. The facetious Dr. Wallace gave a long address, but, after his splendid effort a few weeks before, it fell very flat. Mr. Chamberlain, as usual, was vigorous and effective. Neither Mr. Balfour nor John Morley rose to the occasion. Mr. Gladstone, after the division (and his majority of thirty-five), sat tranquilly enough at the bench writing

to Her Majesty informing her that he had at last forced the House to carry the Bill. The cheers that came from the gentlemen on the Irish benches were feeble in the extreme. As I have said, the feeling that predominated was one of relief—not triumph.

1895. End of Session. Hypnotic experiment at Westminster (good subject!)—Morley as a professor of hypnotism putting the Home Rule Bill in a trance.

1898. *June*. Sketched John Morley for my open letter in the July number of *Fair Game*, and I think I have got him. He is now quite a good speaker, but he does not much resemble the philosopher which is the subject of the illustration. For the life of me I cannot make John Morley a philosopher.

. . . . .

I must stop quoting from my diary in order to quote the article mentioned above, which is written in the form of an address to Morley :

“There is too much of the philosopher about you, too much of the student, for the rough and tumble game of politics: although I am free to confess that, when you are worked up to it, you can make a very good platform speech. It must be exceedingly repugnant to you to have occasionally to address masses of unliterary and semi-educated persons, and you have my warmest condolences on the misfortune that what stands for ambition in your character should have ever led you into such a position. You have proved your erudition and mastery of the English language by editing a daily, a weekly, and two monthlies, besides writing several severe essays which are, I suspect, more talked about

than read by the ordinary run of your political admirers. Your essay on 'Compromise,' or at least its title, has, I doubt not, eased the conscience of many a doubting and reluctant Home Ruler. That you abandoned letters for politics has been regretted by all who, like myself, wish you well."

But to resume my diary, I must refer back a few years preceding the last extract :

1905, *Nov. 6th*. Found the (hitherto) lugubrious Ritchie (who married Thackeray's daughter) actually enjoying a jocular mood—in the smoking room of the Garrick Club after lunch. Never saw him smile before. He could not resist the temptation of recounting his interview with his new chief at the India Office—John Morley. He was rather nervous of meeting the great man—which of course he had to do as soon as Morley accepted the Ministerial appointment. Although he was well aware that Morley was a literary man, he had never read any of his books, and was only vaguely aware that his most important work was the *Life of Gladstone*. Primed with this fact, he ventured to remark :

"It is a great honour, I assure you, to work under so distinguished a writer."

"Indeed!" replied Lord Morley. "And may I inquire which of my books pleased you most?"

Ritchie, being a diplomatic and resourceful man, quickly responded: "Your *Life of Gladstone* appeals to me as your finest effort."

The author, palpably pleased, said, after a pause, "I am glad to hear that, but I must admit to a fault—yes, and a bad fault too."



LORD MORLEY



"May I venture to inquire what that can be? It seems to me perfect work."

"No : it has a bad fault. It is not long enough."

Bearing in mind the exceeding length of the book that was "not long enough," one is inclined to doubt the statement that Morley lacked a sense of humour. Yet he certainly had not the reputation of a wit, and I have always been told that, like Gladstone, he was devoid of humour.

The Rt. Hon. W. E. Forster was a somewhat unique personality, and a great force in Victorian politics. Though he never rose higher than Chief Secretary for Ireland, his period of office made history and coined a new name in politics. He was forthwith known as "Buckshot Forster," because of his efforts to put down sedition by force.

He was an early and favourite subject of mine for caricature. I shall always remember his terrible sufferings when Chief Secretary for Ireland. Very able and strictly honourable, he was not the man to stand such bastings. And this last word recalls to memory a sketch I did for *Punch* for the "Essence of Parliament," June, 1881, entitled, "Roasting the Police Force-ter," which represented the Chief Secretary for Ireland roasted on a spit in front of the fire. Toby M.P. wrote "around" that sketch the following words :

"Things are past a joke now. The sympathy of the House entirely with Mr. Forster, as he makes an indignant stand against the violent vituperation and unmannerly attacks made upon him night after night. They do no harm in the estimation of those who hear and see. There may or not be something in the case which Irish members

desire to present. What is certain is that it never will be listened to from the men who assume to represent Ireland under the leadership of Mr. Parnell. They have so often showed themselves incapable of distinguishing between fact and fancy, truth and deliberate lying, that men with other business to attend to cannot spare time to listen on the chance of hearing a few facts.

“To-day he has it out with them. He trembles in every limb with honest indignation, whilst the Irish members sit and watch him as the audience in a theatre sit and watch the champion dancer who gyrates for their amusement. The Chief Secretary’s will may be law at the Castle : but there is a sweet revenge to be taken at Westminster.”

Thus Sir Henry Lucy sums up the treatment and the effect of that treatment meted out to Mr. Forster. But neither Toby M.P., nor myself, nor anyone else would care to place on record the full effect of this “Roasting” on the unhappy Forster.

This reference to Irish Home Rule is interesting, showing the manner in which Radical opinion differentiates between “fact and fancy, truth and deliberate lying”—as distinguished in *Punch* by the letterpress. The same was hotly resented when recorded by the pencil afterwards. And the substance of Toby M.P.’s argument of the treatment received by Mr. Forster might be applied with equal truth to every Chief Secretary since, Birrell excepted.

Mr. Forster was a man naturally impulsive, with an impetuous eye, furrowed and wrinkled forehead and intensity showing in every line of his face. Forced as an official to shove his head through the political pillory

labelled Ireland, he was not the man to assume an indifference he could not call his own. Mr. Balfour could bear the thumb-screw of question time, and the rack of debate. He never winced, in fact he rather seemed to enjoy it. It was his meat, but it was Mr. Forster's poison. Mr. Forster was never at rest. He writhed under the basting he received from the Irish benches. His hair had the appearance of being fired by electricity, his forehead the aspect of suffering. He sat, as it were, on pins and needles. When he stood to make a speech he had a habit of placing his hand under his coat over his hip as if he had an attack of lumbago. Eventually the Irish played him out of the Government. Weary, worn and troubled, he turned a back-somersault and disappeared from the Ministerial Bench to one, if not of repose at least of independence, behind the Government. There he sat in the same familiar attitude with his legs crossed, with his head buried in his chest, his hand thrust in his grey trouser pocket, his coloured waistcoat ruffled—still in fact anything but peaceful. The explanation he gave to the House for his retirement from the Government—that he was unable to follow their Irish policy—was delivered in a rough but honest speech, which deeply impressed the House. A few days afterwards he had again to rise, the grey trousers and coloured waistcoat and tie now a solemn black, paying touching tribute to the memory of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke, who had been foully murdered in Phoenix Park. And then came the Kilmainham Treaty debate, one of the most sensational and certainly the most dramatic of the time. There were conspiracy, sensational accusation and dramatic reprisals, although in this



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Forster played the honest man who had washed his hands of the secret tricks played by the Government. But he got no repose, he was not the man to take rest. Most old parliamentary hands when heckled refuse to be drawn by ingenious and embarrassing questions, but Mr. Forster, like Mr. Gladstone, was unable to resist replying to personal attacks and innuendoes. It was in this very debate that Mr. Forster was asked, if he was not making political use of a private letter received by some member of the Government. To which he would have replied in detail, had the Speaker not intervened and ruled the question out of order. A less sensitive man would not have required the Speaker's intervention, he would have sat still. In the same debate, Mr. Gibson (Lord Ashbourne) referred to Mr. Gladstone's temper in the matter under discussion and his unmeasured vituperation of Lord Beaconsfield, which brought Mr. Gladstone with a bound to his feet. A scene followed that is not easily forgotten. Had anyone twitted Mr. Disraeli with virulent attacks on Mr. Gladstone (in debate), Mr. Disraeli would not have moved a muscle until the time was ripe.

The Victorian era can boast of greater politicians than poor Forster, but few as honest and respected. I wonder what respect the present-day politicians will command after their ignominious surrender to the Irish rebels, those rebels Forster refused to shake by the hand.

On the Victorian political horizon Sir William Harcourt loomed very large—in every sense of the word. In appearance an inflated Sir Robert Peel, but there comparison ends, for he never became Prime Minister, and he was most unlucky. After years of hard work,



RT. HON. W. E. FORSTER



that he should be denied the highest prize gained him universal sympathy. More especially as the man by whom he was robbed—Lord Rosebery—proved himself a failure. Poor Harcourt was then getting old, and the parliamentary Pecksniff might have ruminated in the words of Dickens :

“ ‘Time and tide will wait for no man,’ saith the adage. But all men have to wait for time and tide. Mr. Pecksniff had in this respect endured the common lot of men. ‘An uncommon lot of that common lot,’ Mr. Pecksniff opined.”

With the exception of Gladstone, I do not think I have caricatured any politician more often than Harcourt, and yet, strange to say, he did not like it ! Disraeli, when he first saw a caricature of himself, exclaimed : “Now I am famous !” Lord Rosebery, W. E. Gladstone’s greatest political friend, collected (or rather Lady Rosebery did) my caricatures of the G.O.M. Sir William Harcourt sent me word that I made him too stout.

Sir William was fair game. As a matter of fact, the pen has run the pencil very close in holding the late Sir William up to ridicule, sometimes using my caricatures as pegs on which to hang some elaborate pen-portrait. For instance—“Here is the Great Sir William Harcourt—Mr. Furniss’s Harcourt—bearing before him reef over reef of that hundredfold chin : wearing ever that sinuous smile, curling ever a finger at one of his own disciples, a vision of personified complacency,” is a pen description of my pencil portrait.

. . . . .

I sent Sir William a letter through the pages of my

*Fair Game*, which contained the essence of a Harcourt biography in the following :

“As the inheritor of archiepiscopal traditions you might have aspired to a bishopric, but circumstances impelled you to join a calling that knows no distinction between black and white, provided the brief is well and truly marked.

“In the fullness of time you found yourself in the House of Commons ; and there your forensic gifts served you in good stead, enabling you to argue with irresponsible freedom on behalf of Faction, while making brave show of abundant Patriotism. One so well equipped for the strife and hurly-burly of the Babble Shop could not fail to succeed ; and you *have* succeeded—in a measure. Your qualifications were varied. For we have it on the authority of your sponsors that you were launched on the world as William George Granville Venables Vernon Harcourt. Coupled with this is your own statement that you are a scion of the Plantagenets : you are a Knight Bachelor ; and you have even been described—wholly without warrant—as ‘the Squire of Malwood.’ As befits one so happily endowed by nature and art, you have held the candle to blatant Democracy ; you have lost no opportunity of girding at the Church of your forefathers ; and you are the author of that monumental saying, ‘We are all Socialists now.’

“Moreover, you are ‘Historicus,’ of *The Times*. You have written much, and with a show of erudition, on the Law of Nations : and you have done what in you lies to impose as many bad laws as possible on the nation to which you belong. Altogether, yours is a noble record—a record of golden opportunities just missed.



SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT





"In debate you have contrived to unite the methods of the bully with the special pleadings of the police-court attorney. Over and over again you have shown that, though you can strike a heavy blow, you take your punishment badly.

"From Solicitor-General you soared to Home Secretary (and the best Home Secretary we ever had): later in life you developed a genius for finance, and an admiring country saw you a full-blown Chancellor of the Exchequer. As author of the Finance Act you sent out the undying signal, 'England, Home and Duties!'—Death Duties.

"You nearly escaped being Lord Chancellor; you ought to have been Prime Minister—but your loss was England's gain. Time was when you could make an amusing speech. Your annual addresses to the 'Druids' of Oxford are an abiding memory; but nowadays you are only a preacher of heavy sermons, studded with platitudes that faintly echo epigrams. . . ."

In February, 1877, when Disraeli undramatically walked out of the House of Commons, and quietly entered the House of Lords as the Earl of Beaconsfield, Sir Stafford Northcote took his place. I was then cartoonist to a paper called *Yorick*, and for it drew a cartoon representing Sir Stafford standing at the table with a paper labelled Power in his hand; on the seat behind him was seated the ghost—or astral body—of Beaconsfield in full robes, whispering, "Go on! Go on! My body may be in 'another place,' but my guiding spirit is with you still."

Sir Stafford, however, lacked the spirit of Disraeli. He was a painstaking "safe" politician. As a younger

man he was a Liberal and Gladstone's secretary, but he was unlike his early as well as his later master. Yet in one particular he had a greater influence than Gladstone. Sir Stafford, or as he was later Lord Iddesleigh, influenced quite a number of junior politicians, who imitated his peculiar parliamentary manner. The reason possibly being that he had the best style of any in the House of Commons. Gladstone had too strong an individuality for anyone to attempt an imitation, moreover he was too flamboyant. Sir Stafford spoke in a monotone. He had a peculiar lisping delivery, but it was clear and effective; and he was, in my opinion, a great Victorian statesman, *pace* Lord Randolph Churchill and other ambitious Conservatives, who looked upon Disraeli's successor as an old woman—and as such he was frequently caricatured. This, no doubt, encouraged the young aggressive Fourth Party, and led in time to Lord Randolph Churchill's (self-constituted) leadership of the House.

Lord Randolph departed from the world of politics, a disappointed failure, without power and without friends. Lord Iddesleigh died in harness and in Downing Street.



LORD IDDESLEIGH



## CHAPTER II

### THE DAYS OF ORATORS

THE Victorian age was unrivalled for famous orators, for great speakers, and effective performers, better, perhaps, described as "born actors." The Theatrical Stage, it is true, rose in importance, but I do not include the professional actor in this category.

The undemonstrative men of the respectable classes to-day are absolutely different from those I recall of my younger days. They were, then, one and all, effective players on the World's Stage. I had many opportunities of judging, and they were, as the Americans say, "live men," who acted their parts vigorously. Present-day critics, unaware of these changed circumstances, accuse Charles Dickens of caricature, yet he held the mirror up to nature. The fact that men have changed since his time has been overlooked, or perhaps, it would be fairer to say, lies outside their knowledge. In bygone days conversation was general and information was publicly imparted by public speakers, for the penny newspaper had not arrived. There existed everywhere a special class of accomplished professional orators, who disappeared on the advent of cheap newspapers. These early Victorian orators were typical of the Victorian vitality, and one at least, Mr. George Thompson, deserves a niche in the temple of fame.

He lived in the stormy days of parliamentary reforms, the days of anti-slavery, anti-Corn Law struggles, the Ballot, and other burning questions of the hour. Mass meetings were held all over the country, and it was there George Thompson, for pecuniary remuneration, moved the audiences to the greatest enthusiasm by the eloquence of his splendid voice. That, however, was all Thompson could do. When he became M.P. for Tower Hamlets in the 'forties, he was regarded merely as a second-rate politician. Platform success by no means ensures success in the House of Commons. Ashmead Bartlett, among many others, was a tremendous draw on the platform, but he was laughed at in Parliament.

The author of the following lines evidently had Thompson, or some other professional orator, in his mind when he wrote :

The painter has sketch'd, and the poet has sung  
The mighty effects of the "eloquent tongue" ;  
Its heart-stirring powers are ev'rywhere felt,  
While its torrents are poured, or its thunders are dealt ;  
And the savage and civil, the old and the young,  
Are mov'd by the force of the "eloquent tongue."

It biases reason, and touches the soul,  
And the senses are spell-bound beneath its control ;  
It can rouse with its terror, or lull with its charm,  
Can wound with its arrow, or heal with its balm ;  
And wrought-up assemblies have, tremulous, hung  
On the soul-moving sounds of the "eloquent tongue."

I have failed to discover the name of the author of the "Eloquent Tongue," but, having heard nearly all the great and eloquent men of my time, I may say that no one deserves such an eulogium as George Thompson.



GEORGE THOMPSON



voice, wherein Nature and artifice fit close together, showing no mark of a join. He uses his head as the rudder of a ship, turning it now this way and now that, directing his course to the ever-given point of persuasion. His eyes and hands both speak ; even his grey hair, tumbling backwards from his temples, is eloquent."

It was Lord George Bentinck who said of John Bright, that if he had not been a Quaker, he would have been a prize-fighter, an aphorism which exactly described that eloquent though narrow-minded petulant politician, and particularly applicable to him in his latter days, when he was out of office. Prize-fighters when their ring days are on the wane become bullies or chuckers-out. Bright abrogated to himself, politically speaking, the latter office. He was ready and eager to chuck any opponent out with a phrase such as he administered to Sir Charles Adderley on the Treasury Bench: "The right honourable gentleman is a dull man."

It is generally admitted that England's greatest orator of the Victorian era was John Bright. He was lucky in having a large subject upon which to orate—trade mixed with sentiment. Joining Cobden in a crusade against the Corn Laws, he invariably began his orations by describing the evils of Protection (a bogey which he successfully dangled in the eyes of the working man, thereby touching the working man's pocket) and finished with a peroration, describing the starving children, wives and mothers. It was a theme capable of endless variations. It roused the country, it drew huge audiences, and it made the name of John Bright a household word. In and out of Parliament, Bright always appeared "animated by an unusual pitch of oratorical eloquence."



JOHN BRIGHT



He was no loud-tongued platform haranguer, but an orator of the highest class, thrilling his audience with moving pictures—sad, glad, heroic and pathetic. On the whole, he came nearer to the ideal described by the author of the lately quoted verses than any other public speaker of that time. Once the Corn Laws were repealed, he, like Othello, found his occupation gone. His speeches, however, were always noted for their eloquence and elegance, and his silvery voice was his principal charm. His opinions were by many considered narrow and bigoted. His “peace at any price” speeches were frequently delivered in anger, and his oratorical cannon-ading made little impression upon the target. Yet he blazed away at everything and anything and wasted his eloquence upon the political desert air. He was no statesman—merely an orator, and above all a fighting orator. Lord George Bentinck’s remark was certainly a truism.

I regret to say that I only heard him in his later days making spasmodic speeches, such as those spoken in defence of the atheist, Bradlaugh, and later, when he surprised the House by rising to support Kenealy, the man who stood alone at the table without a member to introduce him. I heard Bright make one or two set speeches, but apart from the beauty of his voice I was not impressed. It is to me a subject for regret that his greatness had vanished when I was a schoolboy.

My old friend, the late David Anderson, a brilliant writer of the *Telegraph*, remarked of Bright: “John Bright, the Tribune of the People, has been misunderstood and misjudged; has been mistaken for a maker of laws, whereas he is an artist in words.”

It is interesting to note how few phrases of Bright's are remembered, and the same remark applies to Gladstone. "In the dim and distant future," and "within measurable distance," are two of the most often quoted. Unlike Macaulay, who coined many a happy phrase, such as, "Although Ireland is always combustible, Ireland is not always on fire." And a remark quoted by him in a speech to the House and originated by William Pulteney, a great political leader a hundred years before: "The heads of the parties are, like the heads of snakes, carried on by their tails."

The last occasion on which I saw the great John Bright was at the National Liberal Club, where I was lunching with a member of Gladstone's Government, who, like John Bright, had lately retired from the Cabinet. We discussed the very inartistic buildings in which we were—the huge pretentious pile encased in Doulton ware that had been lately opened—and we saw John Bright making a survey with his nephew. They came up to our table, and John Bright said to me:

"What do you, as an artist, think of the Club?"

"Well, sir, I have an idea it is misnamed; it should be called the National Lavatory Club—my host here has come to wash his hands of the Government."

Bright went off laughing heartily. I never saw him again.

Yes, undoubtedly the Victorians were great orators, either born orators, as John Bright, or trained by an art carefully concealed. They were marvellously effective.



JAMES NASMYTH



## CHAPTER III

### THE TYPE—VICTORIAN

**I**T is interesting to observe how every epoch, to judge by its celebrated men, produces a distinct type of physiognomy. The Georgian type is quite distinct from any other. The Victorian type, I venture to suggest, was distinctly Gladstonian. But as usual I must use my pencil to prove my case, and here introduce the portraits of some of Gladstone's contemporaries, though I am not, to use a Gladstonian phrase, "within measurable distance" of completing the list.

James Nasmyth, the eminent engineer, was, perhaps, most like Gladstone facially, though in character no one could have been more opposite. But, like Mr. Gladstone, he was of Scotch descent, and his father was the famous painter, Alexander Nasmyth. One of the first inventions of James Nasmyth was a small steam-engine with which he ground his father's colours. And his greatest achievement—the work by which he made his name and fortune—was the huge steam hammer capable of forging a wrought-iron shaft thirty inches in diameter, yet so completely controlled that it could crack a nut without splitting the kernel. After retiring from business at a comparatively early age, he became an astronomer of no little merit, and a great authority on the moon. He



inherited much of his father's talent, and it is curious to note that he held his pencil in his left hand.

James Anthony Froude was among those who bore a strong type of resemblance to Gladstone, and was, perhaps, more after Mr. Gladstone's heart, in spite of his *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, and his attacks upon ecclesiasticism, to say nothing of his opinions of the Irish. Froude was a man of strong views, a great friend of literary men such as Ruskin, Carlyle and Tennyson, and a literary stylist of the first water. He married a sister of Mrs. Charles Kingsley, and both socially and professionally was within that circle to which Gladstone, outside of politics, belonged. Oxford was also dear to him, as it was to Gladstone.

It may be said without bias that both Gladstone and Froude were at times supremely inaccurate. And, of all men, responsible politicians, ministers and historians should be accurate. But it is not denied, even by the most intimate friends and warmest admirers of these two men, that, when they were bent on driving home some theory, they were not always accurate of the facts upon which they based their arguments.

It is only necessary to examine the similarity in their determined, strong faces to see that both were men who believed they were accurate, and neither would ever be convinced to the contrary.

Archbishop Temple and Gladstone were not only friends but resembled each other in many ways. The Radical prelate was a man of the people, an energetic personality, and both in appearance and mind, as well as in simplicity of dress and living, was extremely like the Grand Old Premier. When Bishop Temple's engage-



**JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE**



ment to the aristocratic daughter of the Hon. W. S. Lascelles was announced, Archbishop Tait cried out in huge amusement :

“Here is our only Radical bishop going to marry a close connection of three dukes !”

And also, like Gladstone, there were many who, without according admiration, had yet to acknowledge his estimable qualities, and admit the wise austerity of the “Head.”

“If Temple is a beast, he is a just beast,” one of his Rugby pupils grudgingly admitted.

The Bishop of London was a typical schoolmaster, who seemed unable to divest himself of his scholastic mind.

I shall never forget the amusing scene that took place during the trial of the Bishop of Lincoln. The day I was at Lambeth Palace, Sir Francis Jeune was acting counsel for the defence. The Bishop of London, a typical pedagogue, addressed the counsel with severity :

“Once again, please—repeat that slowly—now once again—that’s better—once more—slowly please.”

We expected to hear every minute, “That’s a good boy ; you shall have your remove.” Mr. Jeune (he was then “Mr.”) got it. He rose to the Bench and became Sir Francis.

I could, if space permitted, give many other instances of great Victorians who bore a strong resemblance to Gladstone. But Temple was the Victorian type *par excellence*. Large nose, determined mouth, intellectual forehead, good eye and an expression entirely devoid of humour.

I might include Lord Sherbrooke, who, in spite of his

full and somewhat flabby lips and small eyes, still revealed the prevailing Victorian characteristic.

Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke, was one of the most brilliant Victorians, but one of the most unpopular. To be unconventional is to be unpopular. One may be bored with a club-room full of "popular" members, but once discover the man who bears the reputation for unpopularity, and he will be usually found interesting. And Lowe was well aware of his unpopularity, and actually made the following extenuation :

"My dear and lamented friend, Sir George Lewis, used to say that, if he were to be cast away on a desert island, I was the associate whom he would choose. And I have been told that Sir Alexander Cockburn said that I was the companion he would choose on a wet day in a country house. I might say with Shakespeare, 'Wherefore are these things hid?' Why did not you employ whatever conversational power you possessed in making yourself popular? The answer is given in what I said before. I could not conciliate my victims or my antagonists because I could not find them. Thus, with a quiet temper and a real wish to please, I have been obliged to submit all my life to an amount of unpopularity which I really did not deserve, and to feel myself condemned for what, after all allowance has been made for numerous faults and follies, were really rather physical than moral deficiencies. The fact also that I had contrived to raise myself to so prominent a position prevented people from making allowance for physical deficiencies which, if better known, would doubtless have been more generally allowed for."

The physical deficiency to which he refers was his misfortune of being an albino. An albino, as the



ARCHBISHOP TEMPLE



dictionary informs us, is "a human being or animal whose skin and hair is abnormally white, and the pupil of the eye of pink colour." Robert Lowe's hair, eyebrows, eyelashes were as white as snow, but his skin was very pink, which emphasized the whiteness of his hair. His eyes could not face the light, he kept them shut or blinked them in a painful manner. This sad defect had nothing to do with his unpopularity—Professor Fawcett was totally blind and yet popular. His tongue and not his appearance was his undoing. An anonymous critic of Lowe thus sums him up :

"The causes of this lack of popular favour are a curious, an interesting study, despite that they are anything but abstruse. In a word, Robert Lowe was too clever by half. So many of us are fools, and so many are humdrum, commonplace and bourgeois, that the man who is not only none of these things, but goes out of his way to make the rest of us feel our inferiority, is certain to be disliked ; and in a great measure he deserves his fate. A man of extraordinary ability in certain directions, Robert Lowe was yet in many respects a prig. The very worst and most disagreeable form of university 'side' enveloped him as with a mantle. He was an immensely superior person. His epigrams, amazingly witty though they were, were too biting to be really great ; for wit, to be perfect, should at least sometimes be kindly. Among his intimates he was indeed delightful ; to the general public he was a clever but maladroit politician with a rasping tongue. As a politician he was, as he himself admitted, a failure. His sensational distinctions were small, and he has left no mark upon the political history of his time, save as

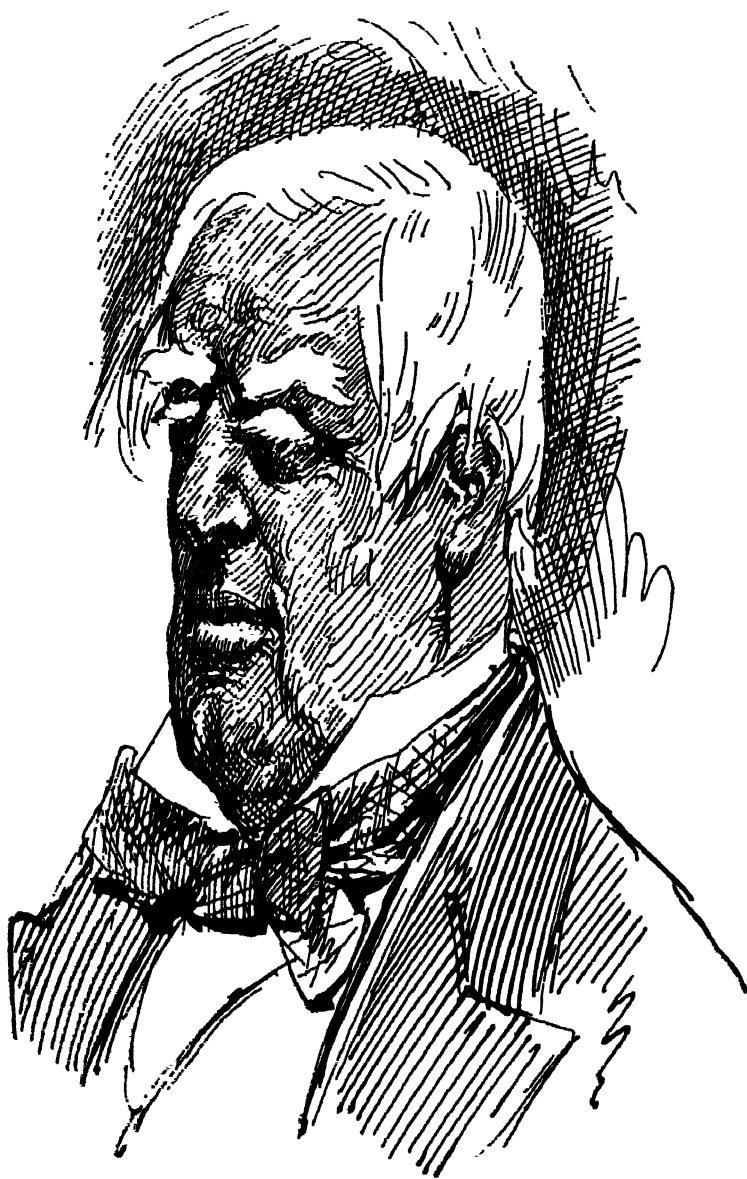


regards his hopeless struggle against the advance of democracy. That story would, indeed, be a remarkable chapter in any man's life ; in Lord Sherbrooke's case it serves to heighten the contrast with the barrenness of the rest of his political record."

That his speeches in the House were so brilliant as to be absolutely sensational, must be admitted. Disraeli referred to him as "an inspired schoolboy," from his inveterate habit of quoting commonplace scraps of Latin. Robert Lowe was a brilliant scholar, a cynic more than a wit, an Oxford man saturated with learning and 'Varsity snobbery of the most detestable kind. Such a superior person that he could never hide his utter contempt for his fellow-men, and the greatest man—be it noted—of the Victorian era.

The height of his unpopularity was reached when, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he put a tax on matches. Matches in those days were usually sold in the streets by youthful hawkers. They were a large and persistent clan, with most energetic methods of pursuing their trade. Armed with long rods, they held their match-boxes up to travellers seated on the "knife-boards" of the old-fashioned omnibus. When Lowe's bomb-shell burst, these sellers realized that their popular trade would be ruined by the tax, and they paraded the streets, and held mass meetings to protest. The comic papers, the theatres and music-halls made satirical attacks on the Chancellor, and undoubtedly no politician before—or since—was more bitterly attacked and ridiculed.

I happened to be under the Gallery in the House of Commons when Lowe made his last speech. He was speaking at the table, but his notes, it appeared, got



VISCOUNT SIERBROOKE



confused and out of order. He held the pieces of paper close to his curious eyes, and at last, in a most dramatic manner, he threw them down with a hopeless gesture on the table, and said, "I have done!" . . . His sight had failed him, and he never spoke in the House again.

The last occasion on which I saw him, he was a complete wreck. He was in the Row on horseback, his docile steed led by one servant, whilst a second attendant held the Viscount on the saddle, and occasionally wiped his nose.

Charles Darwin, the great naturalist, was one of those wonderful men who made the Victorian era remarkable. He was a unique personality and a type unto himself. At a time when evolutionary theories were engrossing scientific thought, his *Origin of Species* was the most daring and original. He became at once the most talked-of and criticized man in Britain. He was also the most caricatured.

It was somewhat unlucky for Darwin, but fortunate for the caricaturists, that popular opinion credited him with the theory that man originated from monkeys. He was uncommonly like one himself. His intellectual head in profile bore a remarkable resemblance to the ape—his bushy eyebrows, his deep-set penetrating eyes, short nose and his thought-wrinkled face. When I was a young man "Darwinism" was one of the most engrossing—perhaps *the* most debated subject of the day. I have heard artists advance the theory that men's faces, expressions and even the shape of their heads gradually take their expression and form from the subject with which they are mentally engrossed. Yet I only recollect one man mentioned as an illustration of that absurd theory—and he was Darwin.

Darwin was fifty years old before he startled the world with *The Origin of Species*, at which he had been working for twenty years. He must have been therefore thirty when the idea first originated, and surely too late in life for any change in the conformation of his features. Certainly Darwin did not alter. He has placed on record that his nose nearly wrecked his whole career. His first great chance in life came when quite a young man. He was one of a surveying party, whose work it was to explore Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, the coasts of Chile, Peru and the islands of the Pacific. The expedition was under the command of Captain FitzRoy, R.N., in a ten-ton brig, the *Beagle*, of which Darwin wrote :

“The voyage of the ‘Beagle’ has been by far the most important event of my life, and has determined my whole career,” and adds that he narrowly escaped being refused by the Commander, and his career thereby wrecked.

“Afterwards, on becoming very intimate with FitzRoy, I heard that I had run a very narrow risk of being rejected on account of the shape of my nose ! He was an ardent disciple of Lavater, and was convinced that he could judge of a man’s character by the outline of his features ; and he doubted whether anyone with my nose could possess sufficient energy and determination for the voyage, but I think he was afterwards well satisfied that my nose had spoken falsely.”

The old Swiss physiognomist, Lavater, was responsible for many errors. Every artist knows that the eye is the index to the mind, not the nose, as FitzRoy evidently concluded. But even professional phrenologists—Germans



**CHARLES DARWIN**



included—were baffled by the shape of Darwin's extraordinary head. He learned later in life that "the shape of my head had been the subject of a public discussion—at a German psychological society—and one of the speakers declared that I had the bump of reverence developed enough for ten priests." And at the time he was an Agnostic!

Perhaps one of the most remarkable men among the Victorians, and one of the finest friends of collegians, was Dr. Jowett, Master of Balliol College, Oxford. He was educated at St. Paul's School, and was elected to a scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1835, and to a fellowship in 1838. He was tutor of Balliol College from 1842 to 1870. On the recommendation of Lord Palmerston, in 1855, he was appointed to the Regius Professorship of Greek. In 1870 he was elected Master of Balliol, an office which he held to the day of his death. The honorary degree of Doctor was conferred upon him by the University of Leyden, in February, 1875, by the University of Edinburgh at the Tercentenary in 1884, by the University of Dublin in 1886, and by the University of Cambridge in 1890. He served his term as Vice-Chancellor of the University for four years, 1882–86.

The Master will ever live in the memory of Oxford men as the great little man who had done more to popularize their 'Varsity than all the big muscular characters which it has glorified. I once had the pleasure of spending an evening in his company, and before dinner had an hour's walk with him, when (I admit it!) I was waiting for those eccentricities inseparable from the name of Jowett. But I found him a pleasant and



most entertaining man of the world. By no manner of means could I conjure up the don or the bugbear of Balliol undergraduates. After his death I came across the following, written by an undergraduate, and published in a weekly periodical of the time: "But it was even more by his personal intimacy with individuals than by his liberality towards the college that he won the regard of all." None of us will ever forget that kind, bright face, with its scanty snow-white hair, or the thin falsetto voice, "which spake not often and yet spake much." Most of the stories of his sayings are cruel libels, representing him as a rude, snappy old man. One in particular comes to my mind. It is said that an undergraduate was asked to walk with him in the afternoon. Silence reigned supreme between them, the young man's bashfulness growing the while. As they turned towards home again, he at length mustered up courage to say that it was a fine day. The Master made no reply until they reached college. Then he said (says the story): "I didn't see much in that remark of yours." This is pointless, except as an instance of incivility. As a matter of fact, once the silence had been broken, the Master took part in the conversation, and at the end of the walk said, in utter kindness: "It is a mistake to make unmeaning remarks merely for the sake of saying something. It is better to be silent than to say that which can only appear foolish to your companion." Here is the Master's manner—drawing a lesson for the government of one's everyday outward conduct from a trivial incident.



PROFESSOR JOWETT



## CHAPTER IV

### A FEW PERSONALITIES IN DIFFERENT SPHERES

“**N**CESSITY is the mother of invention.”

Isaac Holden, for many years a curious and popular figure in Parliament, was a very small, energetic old man with a big nose, twinkling eyes, a profusion of hair and a massive beard and moustache. He informed me that, when a master in a school, he invented the lucifer match for the convenience of the boys, and, although huge fortunes had been made out of matches, he never received one penny for the invention.

The most trivial incidents have often originated the fortunes of our richest men. Take, for example, the fortunes made out of Bessemer's steel. This genius, young Bessemer, had some idea of making steel out of iron, but a poor, newly married young man has no means of experimenting on a large scale. The story I must tell as I have heard it from an intimate friend of Bessemer, a true tale which, by the way, I have never seen in print. After Bessemer had in his small laboratory experimented with the metals, and at last obtained the desired result, by blowing air through melted iron, he found in the bottom of the crucible a little lump of famous steel. Now, the question was, how to make the discovery public? He put the lump of steel into his pocket and made his way to Nasmyth, of steam-hammer

fame. Placing the metal on Nasmyth's desk he told him that he had made this extraordinary discovery, which would revolutionize the whole metal world. Then came a little incident which shows what wonderful heads these Scotch financiers possess. What do you think Nasmyth said to this excited inventor?

"Eh, mon, it's vary risky to show your wonderful invention. The world is very dishonest."

To which the inspiring inventor replied:

"Right, Mr. Nasmyth. I just calculated whom I was coming to see, so with my last half-crown I registered the invention on my way."

But this is an interlude. What I was coming to was how he made his invention public. The Iron and Steel Institute was celebrating its annual meeting just at that time. He went to the country town in which it was being held, and to his chagrin found that the syllabus was complete and no other subject could be introduced. He, however, pleaded so hard that the secretary said he would put the subject on the proceedings before business began in the morning, and he could read his paper on his new invention if he liked.

Bessemer was delighted, and the next morning he came down to breakfast at the hotel full of anticipation and confidence. He ordered two boiled eggs, because it was the cheapest breakfast, and while waiting for them he listened to the conversation of two men seated at the opposite side of the same table.

"You're down pretty early, old chap, aren't you?" said one to the other.

"Yes. Some idiot says he has discovered how to make steel out of iron. The curtain on our proceedings



SIR ISAAC HOLDEN



begins with this pantomime this morning. Generally the farce comes at the end of the play."

"Strange to say," said the other, "it's the very thing that has got me up so early. It does one good to have a laugh in the morning. We don't extract much humour out of our proceedings as a rule."

The two eggs arrived, but poor Bessemer was so overcome by what he had heard that he told the waiter to keep them for his lunch.

The other act in the comedy was when Bessemer rose before the small and early audience to read his paper. He found he was tongue-tied, and could not express himself, nor could he read what he had prepared. So, after fumbling about for a long time, embarrassed by the tittering of those in front, he put his hand in his coat-tail pocket, slammed the lump of steel on the table and said, "That's what I've made, and I'll tell you how I've made it." And without any ornamentation of language he briefly and clearly told his story. He then went back to the hotel and called for those two eggs.

Before he had finished them in walked the two gentlemen who had sat at the same table with him at breakfast. They were profuse in their apologies for the flippant remarks they had made, and assured Bessemer they had no idea who he was or they would not have expressed themselves as they did. They assured him also that they were most impressed with his wonderful discovery, and asked him all about himself. When they heard that he was penniless, and was therefore unable to experiment, they said they would finance him. One of them said that he was convinced the discovery was of tremendous value, and he would back his opinion by



giving up half his ironworks to Bessemer to carry out his invention if he would give him one-half per cent on the proceeds for a number of years. The other man was a financier. He said that he would give Bessemer a thousand pounds down and a large sum per annum for a term of years if he would give him one per cent on the profit. Sufficient to say that both these gentlemen retired as millionaires long before they expected.

The Railway engineers are sufficient in themselves to immortalize the Victorian era. In their wake followed remarkable Railway managers. No doubt we have, to-day, men equal, if not superior, to any Victorians, but they are not the pioneers. I knew many of them—all men of strong character and extremely interesting individualities; and by far the most fascinating to me, as an artist, was John Staats Forbes.

Long ago I contributed an article entitled "Walking Encyclopædias" to a magazine, and I have meditated following it with one of a similar kind and calling it "Walking Theatres"—men and women who possess the power of entertaining both dramatically and humorously. And as an illustration I would select Forbes as one of the most entertaining of men I have ever met—who was not merely a funny man but a rich comedian, who had that contra-quality, which all true comedians must possess, pure pathos and true tragedy. The last time I had a chat with him, shortly before his death, he spoke of his troubles with his shareholders on the Metropolitan Railway. He said that the mistake he made was allowing any dividend to be paid. "It spoilt them," he said. "At one meeting, after many years of waiting, I paid a halfpenny a share. At the



JOHN STAATS FORBES IN MILLET'S STUDIO



next meeting, nothing. Then there was a row." He smiled and his eyes twinkled. "That's the worst of allowing the cubs to taste blood!"

It is said that he never hurried himself. His unpunctuality was proverbial. Those kept waiting stormed, cursed and swore vengeance. But no sooner had the imperturbable Forbes, with his courteous manner and irrepressible humour, faced them, than they were instantly soothed by his winning smile, and reconciled by his charming manner and witty apologies. If in business he did not hurry, he was certainly, during his leisure, even more dilatory. The shrugging of shoulders, facial expression, movement of hands and general by-play, if exercised by a dull man, would have driven listeners crazy. With Forbes it was delightful. I have known him take half an hour to tell a story which any other *raconteur* would have finished in five minutes. Forbes (the actor!) knew the value of his pauses, and it was his manner of telling his tale that fascinated his listeners.

He was one of the most discriminating patrons of art, a great collector of French and Dutch art. Josef Israels I met at dinner with Forbes in Paris, and I visited Fontainebleau in his company and spent some days at Barbizon among the studios.

A few months before Sir John died, my daughter and I lunched with him at his charming house on the Chelsea Embankment. And afterwards we spent a delightful time looking at the wonderful collection of Millets and recalling incidents of our visit to Millet's studio at Barbizon. I shall never forget the visit. We were entertained by the wife and daughter of the great painter in the curious, ramshackle old studio.

On the easel was Millet's last picture, unfinished. He had died years before, but the studio was as he left it. His widow pointed out a chair in the corner, the one on which his friend Rousseau died.

I had, I still have, my doubts as to whether she knew that Forbes was one of her husband's greatest admirers and that he had a fine collection of Millet's studies in Chelsea. She certainly was not aware that, at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, two men arrived fresh from Paris with the famous "Angelus" and other wonderful works of Millet, piled in two cabs, and, pulling up at Forbes's door, offered them for sale—that, failing to negotiate a sale, they begged that Forbes would give the pictures shelter until the war was over.

But this hard-headed promoter, who could face with equanimity committees of Parliament and heckling lawyers, who presided unmoved over assizes and meetings of shareholders, was touched to tears by the story of the poor modest little widow of Millet. For Forbes was an artist at heart, and his adoration for the genius of Millet made his humblest possessions sacred.

The garden was overrun with flowers, and I noticed a servant, among the leaves, washing some clothes. My thoughts went back to her predecessor, Millet's celebrated model—Adele Marier, who grew up in Barbizon, and helped to keep house with the artist's hard-worked wife, and sat to Millet for his pictures.

Sir Edward Watkin, who was Forbes's contemporary and rival, was also a very able, if not quite so entertaining an actor as Forbes. He told me, however, of one amusing story concerning the Shah of Persia's visit to England. It appeared that his Imperial Majesty

had the same fear of our trains as more famous potentates, and he stopped the train from Portsmouth, declaring it was going too fast! The request of the Shah was mild compared with that of his distinguished predecessor, who created a sensation in England during the early 'seventies, when Sir Edward Watkin and his staff narrowly escaped decapitation, and on the very first journey made by the late Shah from Folkestone to London. It appears that the Royal carriages were utilized for the first time for a few years, and no sooner had the train got up full speed than the axles, overheated, ignited some woodwork beneath the saloons. To ensure the safety of the Royal guests, Sir Edward was travelling by the same train, and he was horrified to see, as they passed through the stations crowded with cheering people, the Shah's staff hanging from the windows and doors, flourishing drawn swords and trying, fortunately in vain, to cut off all heads within reach. The train was stopped, and the fire—the cause of this bloodthirsty demonstration—located and quenched. Another carriage was procured, and the Shah landed safely in London.

Anthony Trollope was one of the brilliant band of Post Office officials who made themselves famous by exchanging the official pen for the writer's quill. Edmund Yates (Trollope's contemporary) was another, and also Walkley, the clever dramatic critic of *The Times*, who has not long since retired from St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Trollope was a Post Office man in the days of Rowland Hill, who most cordially hated him. In his Autobiography he thus refers to his famous chief: "And then there were the feuds—such delicious feuds! I was

always an anti-Hillite, acknowledging, indeed, the great thing which Sir Rowland Hill had done for the country, but believing him to be entirely unfit to manage men or to arrange labour. It was a pleasure to me to differ from him on all occasions: and, looking back now, I think that, in all differences, I was right."

Edmund Yates, who knew both and worked in the same offices for years, contrasts the two men:

"It is scarcely possible to imagine a greater contrast to Rowland Hill than Anthony Trollope, physically—save that both were bald and spectacled—and mentally. One small, pale and, with the exception of a small scrap of whisker, closely shaven: the other big, broad, fresh-coloured and bushy-bearded; one calm and freezing, the other bluff and boisterous; one cautious and calculating, weighing well every word before utterance, and then only choosing phrases which would convey his opinion, but would give no warmth to its expression: the other scarcely giving himself time to think, but spluttering and roaring out an instantly formed opinion couched in the very strongest of terms. 'I differ from you entirely! What was it you said?' he roared out once to the speaker who preceded him at a discussion in the office."

Although Trollope died in 1882, his novels are still read; indeed there is, I believe, quite a revival in some of his books. He is one of the few Victorians appreciated by the present generation.

Trollope's books were issued in the popular three-decker volumes, a most delightful form to handle, and so published to meet the three-volume subscription of the circulating libraries. The great and obvious objection



ANTHONY TROLLOPE





was the padding found necessary by authors to swell their volumes to the required length, often at a sacrifice of their art. Not so with Trollope. His pen was never affected by the vagaries of artistic demands. His was the most calculating, mechanical mind. He wrote in the spirit of commercialism, he never faltered for lack of divine inspiration, nor did he waste his time.

A three-volume novel represented so many thousand words, divided into hours, and during each hour he wrote as regularly as clockwork exactly five hundred words. He confessed in his Autobiography that :

“To me it would not be more absurd if the shoemaker were to wait for inspiration, or the tallow-chandler for the divine moment of melting. If the man whose business it is to write has eaten too many good things, or has drunk too much, or has smoked too many cigars—as men who write will sometimes do—then his condition may be unfavourable for work, but so will be the condition of a shoemaker who has been similarly imprudent. I have sometimes thought that the inspiration wanted has been the remedy which time will give to the evil results of such imprudence. *Mens sana in corpore sano*. The author wants that, as does every other workman—that and a habit of industry. I was once told that the surest aid to the writing of a book was a piece of cobbler’s wax on my chair. I certainly believe much more in the cobbler’s wax than in the inspiration.”

The cobbler’s wax was the means to a very substantial end.

Sixty-three thousand he earned by his books and seven thousand pounds from his journalistic work. He prided himself on writing more than any other author

of his day, and a great deal related to clerical life, of which he confessed himself ignorant. The Cathedral towns he so graphically described were pure inventions, as he himself asserted.

In Yates's opinion, Trollope had a very poor notion of humour, both in his works and in private life. He was a kind-hearted man, but his manner was desperately against him. He would bluster and rave and roar, blowing and spluttering like a grampus. I have heard many tales about him at the Garrick Club, but a club is hardly the place to put the best interpretation on a man.

One of the most important of the Victorian measures, and one by which the public reaped infinite benefits, was the reorganization and redistribution of the Post Office, and the establishment of the penny post. All of which were largely due to Sir Rowland Hill. And, in spite of Trollope's opinion to the contrary, Hill was a great man.

According to Edmund Yates, who worked under him for twenty-five years, Sir Rowland had a caustic wit.

" 'I'm afraid I must take the blame of that, Sir Rowland,' said one of his chief subordinates to him. 'You must indeed, for you've deserved it,' was his rejoinder. 'I should be very sorry to see you adopt such a measure, Sir Rowland,' said another. 'You had better reserve the expression of your regret until it's called for,' remarked the old gentleman, in chilling tone."

A typical instance of Hill's direct method of argument at a meeting of Post Office officials is related by Yates, who happened to be present. "When someone had been talking of 'official phraseology,' the old gentleman made a great hit. 'One of you gentlemen,' he

said, 'has used the words "official phraseology."' Now official phraseology is a good thing in its way, but very often it by no means describes the actually existing state of affairs. For instance, in writing to you gentlemen, I am accustomed to describe myself in official phraseology as "Your obedient humble servant," whereas,' and here he sat up and glared round through his glasses—'whereas I'm nothing of the sort!' "

At one time, and before I had my own horse, I used to hire a hack from a stable in St. John's Wood, kept by a man called Trinder. He was an aristocratic, gentlemanly old riding master, and as a young man had been a fine and very accomplished rider. When the notorious American, Rarey, caused a sensation by professing to ride any animal brought to him, no matter how vicious it might be, and at the same time challenged any man in England to compete with him in this public exhibition of horsemanship (which drew great crowds), it was young Trinder who accepted the challenge and jumped in the ring and won success. With the result that a young lady present fell madly in love with Trinder and married him. She was Sir Rowland Hill's daughter.

Wilkie Collins was a greater Victorian than he is commonly credited with being. His reputation suffered because he lived and wrote books at the same time as Charles Dickens. Had Dickens never existed, Collins would have dominated the novel-reading public, but as it was he enjoyed great popularity. His *Woman in White* proved a phenomenal success. I only saw him once. He was a small round-shouldered man, bearded, as so many literary men and journalists were in those days, from Trollope to Besant, and he, too,

wore spectacles. But I imagine Wilkie Collins had a squint. One came across him very seldom at public gatherings, and in his latter days he lived the life of a hermit, the reason for which Sir Hall Caine explained in a very interesting interview.

Caine and he were discussing some knotty point in authorship. "Wilkie was much worried," so writes Caine. "'My brain is not very clear,' he said once or twice, taking a turn across the room. Presently, and as if by a sudden impulse, he opened a cabinet, and took out a wine-glass and what seemed to be a bottle of medicine. 'I'm going to show you one of the secrets of my prison-house,' he said with a smile. Then he poured from the bottle a full wine-glass of a liquid resembling port in colour. 'Do you see that?' he asked. 'It's laudanum.' Straightway he drank it off. I was all but dumbfounded.

"'Good heavens, Wilkie Collins,' I said, 'how long have you taken that drug?'

"'Twenty years,' he answered.

"'More than once a day?'

"'Oh yes, much more. Don't be alarmed. Remember that De Quincey used to drink laudanum out of a jug.'

"Then he told me a story, too long to repeat, of how a manservant of his own had killed himself by taking less than half of one of his doses."

"'Why do you take it?' I asked.

"'To stimulate the brain and steady the nerves.'

"'And you think it does that?'

"'Undoubtedly': and laughing a little at my consternation, he turned back to the difficult subject

I had come to discuss. 'I'll see it clearer now. Let us begin again,' he said." And Hall Caine continues :

"He is gone now, the good, staunch soul. He may have had his weaknesses. I know of very few. He may have had his sins. I never heard tell of any. He was loyal and brave, and sweet and unselfish. He had none of the vices of the literary character—envy and malice and uncharitableness. In the cruel struggle for livelihood that depends on fame he injured no man. He lived his own life and was beloved by his own people. A great tree has fallen in the forest, and left a wide clearing."

## CHAPTER V

### ECCENTRIC LONDONERS

WITH the exception of Paris, London has, I believe, attracted more eccentrics than any other city of the world.

Eccentrics are not fools. To be a successful eccentric, one must have brains. Eccentricity may be the outcome of egoism, an abnormal self-esteem carefully cultivated, but assuredly it is born of something greater than these. It may be a kind of surface vanity. "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity," except—when it is business. And how often eccentricity is worked as an advertising factor no one knows better than the successful eccentric. And where eccentricity begins and genius ends would in many cases be almost impossible to say.

Circumstances may drive genius into the ranks of the eccentrics. Such was the case of Oscar Wilde. He discovered that his poems would not sell. In order to advertise his work he became an eccentric, and it boomed forthwith. Eccentricity paid him well. The more successful he became the angrier grew his contemporaries—and that delighted him. When at Oxford he so exasperated his fellow-collegians with his outrageous eccentricities that they took drastic measures to cure him.

They tied him hand and foot and carried, or rather dragged, him to the top of a steep hill overlooking the

surrounding country, and there threw him into a muddy shallow pool. Wilde, suffering and exhausted, raised himself and surveyed the landscape with a nonchalant air, and, after a long pause, exclaimed in affected tones of great enjoyment :

“ Oh ! What a lovely view ! ”

That was the touch of eccentricity sublime.

Again, when he lectured in the United States at Boston, he was invariably attired in the famous black velvet suit. A number of the undergraduates of Harvard—if I recollect rightly—went to great trouble and expense and had similar suits made for themselves in order to guy the young genius from England.

Just before Wilde was due to appear on the platform, these young velvet-suited gentlemen filed into the hall, knee breeches and silk stockings complete, carrying oranges in their hands, over which they sighed and hung in rapt admiration, in the manner of Grossmith when playing Bunthorn in “ Patience.” But Wilde had been secretly informed. He walked on to the stage, to the immense chagrin of the undergraduates, attired in the immaculate and orthodox evening dress.

Ordinary men, no matter how eccentric they may assume to be, cannot do these things.

Sir Herbert Tree was eccentric, often deliberately and of a set purpose. When in America he foolishly accepted an invitation to address privately a fashionable audience. He completely forgot his promise until the time had arrived for him to appear. Naturally, he was totally unprepared. He rushed into the large assembly room, crowded with expectant admirers, and observing a large mirror hanging on the wall at the back of the



platform from which he was expected to give his address, dashed up to it, put out his tongue and surveyed the reflection with dismay, striking an attitude of horror, and crying out dramatically: "Good God! I'm ill! I must see a doctor!" vanished from the building. That was a stroke of genius.

Eccentricity flourished in the last century. Geniuses sprang up in every sphere of life. The Victorian era, after the Elizabethan, was the greatest in the history of England, and by far the most interesting, humanly speaking. This century is a mechanical, superficial, second or third-rate commonplace period. The gradual assimilation and levelling of classes has resulted in an absence of distinction and individuality.

Men and boys have become slovenly in dress. We have settled down to a kind of go-as-you-please, wear-what-you-like way of existence, and our women and girls have become alarmingly unconventional in attire. Still, from the days of the dandies to the time of Lord Dundreary and on through the Victorian era, clothes have had a great bearing on eccentricity. Most of the characters in the works of Charles Dickens figure as eccentrics—in other words, as caricatures, distorted by strong and unique characterization.

The curious old-fashioned beaver hats, the high coat collars, tight sleeves and knee trousers of Dickens strike modern eyes with curious amazement. Whereas, it was of course merely the ordinary costume of those times. Towards the end of Dickens's career the fashions changed. They merged into the dress of our times, as we find in the last book of all—*Edwin Drood*—proving clearly that, had Dickens lived in this century, Dickens's



BAR LOUNGERS



characters would have missed half their picturesqueness and perhaps even a portion of their popularity.

The affectation of dress exists now only about the Chelsea district, and among colonies of artists, where the man in the street can still detect unmistakable traces of peculiarity.

The Strand has always been the haunt of peculiar characters; but if they exist to-day—which I doubt—how could we detect them? Up to the eighteenth century the Strand was principally residential. In the twentieth century it has reverted to its former state, but the houses have given way to hotels. In the good old days the inhabitants occupied their warehouses or lived in what we now term flats.

When the great Mrs. Siddons became really famous by her acting in Southerne's tragedy, "Isabella," she returned home to 149 Strand, and enjoyed "a frugal meat supper with her father and husband," with the cheering of theatre-going London still in her ears. Nowadays one can guess how such an event would be celebrated in the supper room of some palatial public saloon. Bankers then lived over their banks in the Strand; newspaper proprietors, close to their printing machines.

The present generation, acquainted with London only as it is to-day, can hardly conceive what an eccentric-looking thoroughfare the Strand presented when it was frequented by the last generation, with its old-fashioned theatre frontages, its gaudy hanging advertisements, its newsvendors' shops, with its anything but attractive yet conspicuous eating-houses, its newspaper offices, "wines from the wood" stores, pickle purveyors and temporary

freak-shop attractions, to say nothing of the much-advertised advertising offices and remnants of old buildings that had been once imposing, until utilized for bulging businesses of all kinds. As higgledy-piggledy a place as one could find anywhere and yet with a certain distinction of its own. For, after all, it was the historical Strand.

Environment was a considerable factor in the lives of eccentrics. Wellington Street and Catherine Street off the Strand, the streets of publishers and cook-shops, of public houses and newspaper offices, were then interesting as by-ways of Bohemia. They positively smelt of printer's ink, beer and tobacco smoke. These savoury odours blended in one delightful whole with the effluvia arising from the insanitary state of things in general. Rudyard Kipling once discoursed to the members of the Royal Geographical Society upon the smells of different cities. He might well have introduced the smells of the city of Bohemia as it existed in his early days in London.

Here it was that the *Echo*, the pioneer of the half-penny Press of London, was published. Here also were the offices of the *Court Gazette* and *Court Journal*, the *Illustrated Times*, the *London Herald* (which ended its career before I knew the district). Hard by was the office of the *Morning Post*. What a dignified and aristocratic sheet it was in the days of Lord Byron, who (in *Don Juan*) referred to Coleridge's connection with it. Now it stands, typical of the paper and its character, isolated from the rude surroundings of commonplace trade and plebeian entertainments, a monument of respectability and aristocratic affluence.

When I had time to mix with my fellow-workers in Bohemia, men of the story-telling class were not members of their clubs, nor, for all I know, are they now. They remained in the public-houses and got their "copy" from tipsters and bar loungers. The bar lounge is the descendant of the tavern lounge, the famous Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith and others. When I came to London in the early 'seventies our greatest actors and writers were to be found at the bars. They had not yet begun to patronize clubs. It was in such places that editors bought novels, actors were engaged and dramatists were seen handing over newly written acts, between drinks. Mr. Failure found there consolation and Mr. Success congratulation. They both meant the same thing—drink.

In writing my first reminiscences I related a story which I must retell in order to give its interesting sequel. If, in the old days, the Bohemian scribbler was not in Society, he could at least imagine himself there. Indeed, there was nothing to prevent him speaking of a member of the aristocracy as "one of us," with far less embarrassment and with as much truth as to-day, though now he is invited. He will never mix, no more than oil with water; but there is always, of course, the one and only link—imagination. Imagination can play the queerest pranks, it can even conjure up fancies and make them appear as facts.

I recollect a well-known figure in literary Bohemia (when I knew it well), a writer of stories for the popular papers. Society stories, in which a Duke ran away with a governess, or a Duchess eloped with an artist, each weekly instalment winding up with a sensational event, to carry forward the interest of the reader. This writer,

freak-shop attractions, to say nothing of the much-advertised advertising offices and remnants of old buildings that had been once imposing, until utilized for bulging businesses of all kinds. As higgledy-piggledy a place as one could find anywhere and yet with a certain distinction of its own. For, after all, it was the historical Strand.

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It is the sequel, however, which is the most interesting point in this incident.

Things went wrong financially with the military friend of the peer. He threw up his commission and quietly retired from his clubs and accustomed haunts. He was too proud to complain ; he would not borrow ; he nursed his troubles and told no man. Passing along the Haymarket one day, an elderly, stoutish, well-groomed gentleman of Hebraic persuasion addressed him quietly by name and asked him to walk with him along Panton Street. The officer was surprised. He did not know the person who had accosted him, and at first he was disposed to ignore the man. But there was something about the stranger and his manner which aroused his interest. He accepted the invitation. Then Sam Lewis, for the stranger was he, suddenly asked his companion why he had sent his friend, the Duke's brother, to the office in Cork Street, and then mentioned his own name.

"Well," replied the officer, "I could not help him and, from what I believed of you, I thought I could not do better than send him to you for advice."

"You did quite right," said Lewis. "But what about yourself?"

"Oh, I'm all right," somewhat testily answered the other, and turned to go.

"No, you are not," answered Lewis, who was well aware of the officer's circumstances. "Why don't *you* come to see me?"

"Never!" came the reply. "I have never borrowed and never will. So good day, Mr. Lewis." He turned on his heel and left the money-lender.



quite excellent in his way, a thorough Bohemian, knowing nothing of the Society about which he wrote so fully, had the power of making himself (and sometimes fresh acquaintances) believe that the fiction of his books was a mere retailing of his real life. And he would descant in this fashion. He did not refer to the experiences as related by him as incidents in his story, but as actual events of the day.

“Brandy and soda? Thanks. My dear fellow, I feel a perfect wreck, shaken to pieces. I had an experience to-day I shall never forget. I have just arrived from Devonshire; ran down by a night train to look at a hunter Lord Briarrose wanted to sell me. Bob—that is Briarrose—and I travelled together. He is going to be married, you know; heiress: great beauty—neighbour—rolling in wealth. I stopped at the Castle last night, and before Bob was up I was on the thoroughbred and well over the country, returning about eleven along the top of the cliffs. To my horror, I saw a carriage and pair charging down a road which at one time continued a long distance skirting the cliffs. Cliffs had fallen; road cut off; unprotected; drop down cliff eight hundred feet on to pointed rocks and deep sea. There was nothing between the runaway horses and the cliff except a storm-broken solitary tree with one branch curved over the road. When the horses bolted, the groom fell off. There was only a lady in the carriage, powerless to stop the frightened steeds dashing on to death. As she approached I was electrified. Something told me she was Bob’s fiancée. A moment and I was charging the hunter under that tree. Jumping from the saddle, I clasped the solitary branch

with both hands, and turning, as an acrobat would, on a trapeze, I hung by my legs, hands downwards, calling to the lady to clasp them. The fiery steeds and the oscillating carriage dashed under me—our hands met. With a superhuman effort I raised the fainting fairy form out of the vehicle as it passed like a whirlwind. The next moment horses and carriage were being dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Under our united weight the branch of the tree broke, and we fell unhurt on the moss-covered path. When the eyes of the fair lady opened to gaze upon her deliverer, I started as if shot. She sprang to her feet. ‘Reginald!’ she cried. ‘Is it you?’

“She was my first love. We had not seen each other for years! Thanks. I’ll have some more brandy. Hot this time, with some sugar, please.”

I do not know, I cannot remember, if the name of this tall gentlemanly writer came to my ears. I saw very little of him, though his volubility about his writing and his imaginary experiences were impressed distinctly on my memory, but the man himself passed out of my mind.

Thirty or forty years elapsed, and I was introduced to an author. A tall, military, voluble gentleman, who was producing book after book, and taking the publishing world by storm with novels printed in a cheap form that sold “like hot cakes”—in point of fact he was known as the best seller of our day. He was very popular with everyone. A prosperous country gentleman of liberal and generous habits. This was Charles Garvice, beloved by the shop-girl and clerk readers both here and in America. He sent me one of his books, and as I read

it I believed that I had read something of the kind before in books published during my youth. After a time I ventured to tell him so.

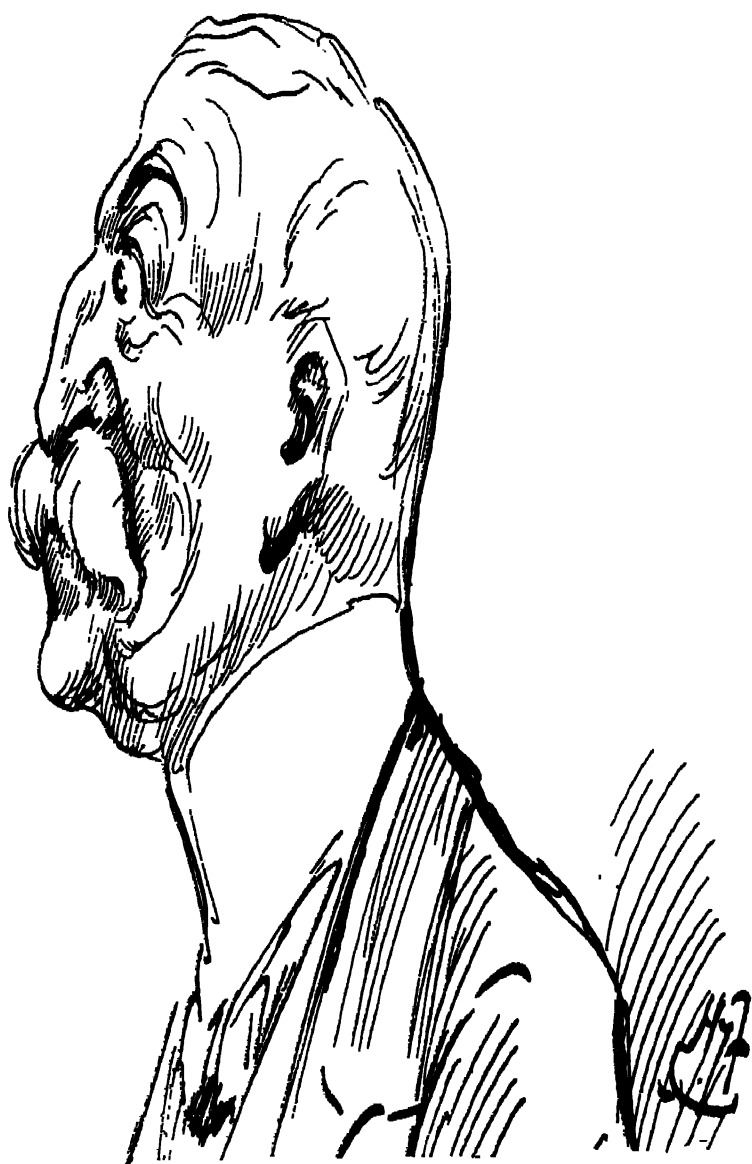
“Right you are, my boy, you have hit it. I reeled those stories off one after the other. I was imbued with them. I lived in them, old chap, and delighted in the work. I could live by them and that was all. I went over to America a few years ago, and found they had extracted my stories from the old papers in which they originally appeared and were selling in thousands. I returned to England and bought up the paper, which carried copyrights from the start, and by this means I got all my old stories in hand again. I rewrite them in parts and reissue them, and, what is more, sell them as quickly as my publishers can produce them !”

That was how the amiable clever Garvice made his fortune. There never was a more popular writer. I saw no trace of his early eccentricity. He looked what he was, a country gentleman, and one who was universally respected. The last time I saw Garvice he told me of the following incident. He was travelling in the Tube with a friend, who had beside him a young girl of the shop-assistant type, who happened to be buried in Garvice's latest book. Garvice got up and left the carriage at his station, and as he was walking out his friend remarked to the girl :

“I see you are reading a story by Charles Garvice.”

“Yus, I am, but what's that to do with you ?”

“Oh, nothing ! But I thought it might interest you to know that that tall military-looking gentleman in the grey overcoat just leaving the carriage is the author—Charles Garvice.”



CHARLES GARVICE



The girl slowly stood up on tiptoe and gazed intently at the retreating form. Then sank into her seat, and ejaculated, "Good Gawd!"

I was on the staff of a new illustrated weekly when I first came to the Strand, and had, of course, to consult my editor. As that individual was not often in his editorial chair I had to seek for him in the bar. And as the original proprietors seemed to think more of brewing punch in the afternoon at the club (which was situated over Gaze's 'Tourists' Offices) than of attending to the interests of their paper, their money not unnaturally vanished. I may say that the editor did so also.

For a long time the *Illustrated London News* had the field to itself, then the *Graphic* started, and others, including the paper I have just referred to, which is still going strong. Ingram, the originator, and, until his death, the proprietor of the *Illustrated London News*, was a very eccentric character, and naturally anxious that no rival illustrated paper should start in opposition. Many were floated in the vicinity of the Strand for the sole purpose of being "bought" (one of the queer ways of journalism). One day a well-known and very eccentric journalist called upon Ingram with a specimen number of a proposed illustrated weekly. Ingram calmly bought the "specimen," out and out, for £500. A few weeks later, back came this journalist—let me call him Vitzbluff—with a specimen copy of another paper.

"You see, Ingram, I had no money to start the other one, but that £500 is all I wanted. I can now start this and I shall." The story goes that Ingram, in place of kicking Vitzbluff out of his office, gave him there and then a retaining fee, to be paid yearly, on the under-

standing that he would not start a rival paper. Vitzbluff and his proposed paper having vanished, he kicked a compositor instead, his usual proceeding when angry. It was said that he retained, for that purpose, a nice chubby mild man who did not mind being kicked, and when the chubby man retired he built a row of houses out of his kicking.

Clever, brilliant scholars and wits were plentiful when the Strand was the centre of the literary and artistic world. It would hardly interest present-day readers to dwell long upon them. They were a type, in spite of their eccentricities, a class the present day would not understand, though no doubt their prototypes exist in Fleet Street or other places—greasy, intoxicated well-educated egotists, such as Thackeray so well described in *Pendennis* and Robertson introduced into his plays.

I recollect in my youth being engaged on a Society sixpenny-weekly edited by a very eccentric genius, originally a college tutor. He practised at the Bar, and wrote and edited, and drank, and swore, and died comparatively young. He was known as Moonfaced Thompson, a brilliant writer and a man well acquainted with everything going on in Society. The journal he edited was well produced and well written, quite above the level of the comic and satirical prints published in those days. I was responsible for the double-page cartoon, and, with the exception of a portrait on the front page, this was the only illustration. One morning the editor read me a very scathing article he had written overnight, apropos of a celebrated Society divorce case then taking place and providing splendid "copy" for the number due a few days later. It was written with



"MOONFACED" THOMPSON





the object of producing a sketch of the lady (in the case) as my "Society Cartoon." To find me a seat at Westminster, he went down to the Court himself. As soon as we arrived, the solicitor for the defence collared him in place of a junior, who for some reason had failed to appear. At lunch-time he sought me out. "Furniss, I told you to caricature the defendant (the lady). Do the opposite, make her as beautiful as you can, and the plaintiff as ridiculous as possible—I am going to rewrite the article."

## CHAPTER VI

### PUNSTERS AND PRACTICAL JOKERS

THE Victorian punster has no follower in the present generation, he has gone completely out of fashion. One rarely hears a pun perpetrated. It seems that they are considered silly and, by some, almost offensive.

It may be that we have not the wits to invent them. A good pun, to be effective, must be purely spontaneous. A punster, moreover, must be ever ready to seize on the opportunity to make his pun. A large bump of perspicuity, and reverence conspicuous by its absence, are necessities to the punster's art. The great Tom Hood and H. J. Byron are names that instinctively occur to the mind in that connection. And to the long list of professional punsters we might add Sir Frank Burnand, whose persistency did much to give punning its *coup de grâce*.

Tom Hood was a poet, but he was also a punster. It seems strange that we should owe our most poignant and heart-searching poems—"The Bridge of Sighs" and "The Song of the Shirt"—to one who bubbled over with the absurdities of life, and who wrote a love ballad consisting of puns, the ingenious "Faithless Nellie Gray":

Ben Battle was a soldier bold,  
And used to war's alarms :  
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,  
So he laid down his arms !

Now as they bore him off the field,  
Said he, " Let others shoot,  
For here I leave my second leg,  
And the Forty-second Foot ! "

In my early days the Strand was the rendezvous of the most popular men connected with literature, art and the stage. The restaurants and Bohemian clubs patronized by wits had also supper rooms for Masonic Lodges or private dinners. A well-known punster was dining with some brother Bohemians in his club, and a great noise going on in the room above attracted his attention. He inquired of the waiter who were the merry party.

" It's the Pawnbrokers' Association, sir."

" Ah, I suppose they are pledging one another."

Although the Law Courts were not then in existence in the Strand, barristers and solicitors had their offices and chambers in the Temple and Inns of Court, Chancery Lane and other adjacent places, and legal witticisms were much in evidence, though lawyers' jokes were generally confined to their own profession, and, naturally, did not always appeal to the Bohemian layman.

One evening I was dining with a worthy friend of mine at a club in the vicinity of Norfolk Street (I forget the name of it) before the locality was rebuilt. I recollect the excellent claret of the club and its fine old brown sherry, and I recollect also the entertaining conversation of the greatest punster of the generation

preceding mine—Sir George Rose. He was the last of the judges of the Court of Review. When that Court was dissolved he was made a Master in Chancery and became Chairman of the Law Fire Insurance Society, which eventually became one of the most important businesses of its kind. Sir George was a small neat man, had a pleasant jaunty air and bubbled over with a rare good humour. His facility for making puns was amazing. Really good puns, in my opinion, can never become obsolete, though bad ones in the hands of blundering stupid people have caused disgust in the minds of the present generation.

An old friend of Sir George, overtaking him one day in Chancery Lane, observed, "I thought it was you, Sir George, walking so fast."

"Ah," he replied, "you knew the rose by the stalk."

Dining on one occasion with Lord Langdale, his host was bemoaning the fact that Langdale could only boast a very diminutive church. "Why," said his lordship, who was its patron, "it is not bigger than this dining-room."

"No," returned Sir George, toying with a walnut, and raising his glass of port, "and the living not half so good."

The worst of your clever punster is that he can never refrain from making a pun even in serious moments. A friend of his died of dropsy. Sir George remarked, "Poor fellow! He has gone to Gravesend by water."

One of the attractions in the Strand in the old days was Simpson's Cigar Divan. Simpson's still exists, but it is about as unlike the dear old Mecca of chess players as a taxi is like an old four-wheeler. The saloon for



SIR GEORGE ROSE



chess was on the first floor, and there all the celebrated chess players were to be found, devotees of the game from the provinces and any colonials who happened to be in London. There, for the modest sum of one shilling per game, masters were willing to take up the challenge of amateurs, and, needless to say, the time for each game depended upon the number of waiting players.

A young water-colour artist of the name of Boden, was Chess Editor of the *Field* in its early days. Boden was a bright Bohemian and quick at repartee. One day, at Simpson's, he was playing a game with a visitor, when a rather objectionable hanger-on kept up a running commentary on the game. "Fancy a champion making that move." "Now then, Boden, hurry up," and so on. To free himself from this bore, Boden finished the game quickly, and his opponent handed him a shilling. "Filthy lucre," growled the bore. "Filthy lucre! Fancy an artist like you minding such filthy lucre!" Boden turned round and said, "It is not the filthy lucre I mind. It is the filthy looker-on I object to."

William Black, the novelist, was very popular at the Arundel Club. Outside the club, H. J. Byron, the dramatist, came across George Augustus Sala having a heated altercation with another dramatist, Frank Marshall, their white waistcoats, for which they were noted, conspicuous in the sunshine. Between them stood the dark-moustached novelist, William Black. "Ah," remarked Byron, "why argue so on literature, two whites will never make a Black."

A ventriloquist of the name of Cole (Lieutenant Cole he called himself), on being introduced to H. J. Byron,



asked him if he was related to the *great* Byron, with emphasis on the "great." "No, thank God, I am not, any more than I am to the little coals."

Shops "to let" in the Strand and Fleet Street were then, and may be still, converted into temporary auction rooms, in which cheap Brummagem goods and showy oddments from various manufacturers, home and foreign, were knocked down to those attracted by the raucous voice and vigorous hammering of the garrulous auctioneer.

A club to which I belonged during its brief existence in the early 'seventies was situated in the Strand and called the Savoy, and composed of pressmen, actors, artists and such-like Bohemians. There a discussion once took place on the subject of these auctions, the argument being that no object put up for sale was ever bought in. A bet was made, and the member who made the assertion backed his opinion against the others present. It was then decided to put the matter to the test. This member was invited to go down the Strand or Fleet Street and select any "auction room" fancied by himself, a foolish act on his part, for it gave the other Bohemians time to arrange the plot which lost him his bet. He found an auction just at its height, and member after member casually followed him in and pushed themselves gradually to the front. Not one of these, though evidently intensely interested, could be tempted to make a bid, they remained consistently glum. This conduct evidently upset the auctioneer, who now and then included facetious remarks about the "dummies in the first row," and questions as to "whether they were keeping their pence to buy lollipops round the



THE AUCTION SCENE

147.2



corner." His taunts moved them not, and the auction went on merrily. Eventually a cheap imitation of a silver vase, "Real silver, gents, a bit of genuine antique, came out of a Baronial 'all, heir 'ard up, brought it in under his harm this morning (the haristocracy generally dump their old silver down 'ere). Wot do you say to 'arf-a-crown, a heirloom for two-and-six. Wot do I 'ear from that gent at the door, a shillin'? Yours, sir." The old family plate knocked down to the same tune to the ordinary public, and the member of the Savoy Club was smilingly nudging his fellow-members to leave "as they must have had enough of it," when a "silver salver" (made in Germany) and possibly rescued from some rubbish bogus heap, was held aloft. One of the Savoyards, to the surprise of the auctioneer, asked leave to handle the object. He turned it round and round, examined it closely, handed it back, when another member of the first row made a similar request. "I'll give a pound for this," he remarked, handing it up to the auctioneer. "I'll give thirty shillings," cried another. "Two pounds," came from the first bidder. "Two-pounds-ten," from the second. The hammer was silent—the auctioneer was speechless. He remained so for some time. "Any—any ad-advance?" he asked with a bewildered air. "Five pounds," was the quick reply. "Ten," said another, but he added, turning to his supposed rival purchaser, "Now then, why give the thing away?" After that there was silence. The puzzled auctioneer had another look at the object in his hand. "Gentlemen, this particular heirloom is not likely to reach its real value—so it is withdrawn."

There was seemingly no end to the childish eccen-

tricity of the Bohemians in the Strand. George Grossmith, Secundus, father of the present actor-manager, George Grossmith, was irrepressible. On leaving a restaurant not far from Bow Street Police Court with some friends, he assumed an advanced state of intoxication, unable to stand or walk without support of his pals. An old four-wheeler with an old family driver on the stand was hailed, and Grossmith was lifted into it. "Here's half-a-crown, cabby," said one of the pals with a wink; "you drive Mr. Grossmith to Bow Street Court." (Grossmith was a reporter there at the time.) "A' right, sir! I see, sir," and the old cabby, chuckling, was soon at the entrance of the Police Court. "Now then, cabby, what do you want?" sternly asked a policeman on door duty. The old cabby winked and pointed with his whip to the cab.

"The gent is hinside—you know 'im!"

"There is no one inside. If you can't move on I'll take your number."

The cabby rose and turned round to look inside, discovering the fare had disappeared. "Well, I'm blowed! Why wot's become of the fare as I started with?"

This reminds me of a somewhat similar joke played upon Paul Merritt, the well-known Drury Lane dramatist, who at one time (when Sir Augustus Harris reigned in Old Drury) provided the successful autumn dramas, such as "The World" and similar spectacular productions. Paul Merritt was a huge ungainly fat man with the fresh hairless face of a baby, and a weak squeaking little voice. As he entered a four-wheeler one afternoon to drive to Haverstock Hill where he lived, one of the



"THE GENT IS HINSIDE—YOU KNOW 'IM!",



Bohemian "boys" jumped up by the driver, on the pretence that he wanted a friendly lift to a house in Bloomsbury, and was there, of course, by Merritt's sanction. As a matter of fact, Merritt did not see the man by the driver. The "driver's friend" directed the cab to the Hospital for Children. As soon as the cab pulled up he jumped down and, entering the hospital, told the officials that a very curious serious and urgent baby case was in the cab, and would they please send some efficient attendants to carry it in. Before a reply could be given he was off.

That the joke came "off" was proved shortly afterwards. Merritt, in his club, was dilating upon the wonderful realism he was introducing into his autumn drama, among other things a real horse and cab, when someone added "with a real baby in it." Merritt rose and left the room, and the cab bit of realism was cut out of the drama.

Fred Barnard was a well-known artist in the 'seventies and 'eighties, a cartoonist and versatile illustrator of great ability, and his practical jokes were often very elaborate and sometimes gruesome. He never surpassed in gruesome elaboration a joke (which may strike some of my readers as more than a joke) played upon a great admirer and friend of his, a potter from Burslem. This charming gentleman was one of the good-old-sort-of-jolly-companionship. He came to London every season and never failed to visit the studios. He was devoted to humorous artists, and when a young man had shown such promise that John Leech, of *Punch*, advised him to adopt caricaturing as a profession. But he found it a too difficult and precarious method of livelihood and wisely remained



in the Potteries. Anyone having seen the delightful play, "A Pair of Spectacles," and remembering Groves as the "Mon fra Sheffield," will have seen my friend, the potter, to the life. A pleasant robust business man—I was positive Groves must have met him in the studios and taken him for his model, not only because of his speech, but in matters of detail, dress and characterization. Nothing surprised me more than to learn from Groves the resemblance was purely accidental. He never saw the "mon fra Burslem."

Well, this genial potter had "advised"—as business people say—Fred Barnard that he would call upon him on a certain day at Steele's Road, Haverstock Hill. He duly presented himself and cheerily rang the bell. Barnard opened the door himself. The visitor's smile vanished, there stood Barnard the picture of misery. With tears in his eyes, he silently grasped the hand of his old friend. "Good God! what's the matter, Fred?" Barnard shook his head and covered his eyes with his handkerchief. "Poor little B—— (one of his daughters). I know, dear boy, you loved her as I did—follow me!"

"How awful!" blurted out the sympathetic visitor; "don't say she is——" Barnard stopped him on the stair leading to his studio. "You are a good Catholic—before—before——" The other Fred could say no more. He opened the door of his studio. The curtains were all drawn and candles alight in long candlesticks were placed round a figure in white drapery lying on a raised couch. At the head of the figure were flowers, and incense was burning in a brazier. The potter, overcome, knelt in prayer for some time, then one thing



PAUL MERRITT



after another caught his eyes and he burst out laughing. He rose and, clapping Barnard on the back, cried out, "Fred, you are the limit, this takes the cake."

The whole thing was a fake. The figure was his lay figure, and the paraphernalia around were studio properties. It was a gruesome joke, one of the queer ways of Bohemian humour.

When my *Punch* drawing of the dirty man was appropriated by the proprietors of Pears' soap, and made famous as an advertisement, with its oft-quoted inscription, "I used your soap two years ago," Barnard saw another opportunity for a joke. He had in his possession an old coat, of the Dickens period, exactly the same as depicted in my sketch. He was a very thin man with a big nose, so he put on the coat, pulled a black shaggy wig over his head, stuck on a moustache, and at once bore a strong resemblance to my dirty man. One evening he strolled round to Regent's Park and knocked at my door. I was in town and my family were "out of town." The servants eyed this dirty-looking tramp visitor with suspicion. "Mr. Furniss not at home? Then I'll call again; just tell him that his uncle called to see him." The message I got from a temporary maid was that "the gent off the 'ordings 'ad called to see me." I, of course, guessed it was Barnard. I wrote him that I was sorry he got nothing out of the dirty man, but he had got just as much as myself from the soap people!

A joke Barnard was very fond of playing consisted of collecting all the available halfpennies and placing some in one pocket and some in another, until every pocket was so provided. Then, taking his model to a restaurant for tea, and choosing a time when the place

was busiest, he adopted a silly, absent-minded manner, took up his bill, amounting to one and threepence, and proceeded to pay at the desk as follows :

“One and threepence, young lady ; but where is the halfpenny ? ”

“No halfpenny, sir ; one and threepence.”

“No halfpenny ? No halfpenny, how sad ! Now, young lady, I happen to have nothing but halfpennies.”

“One and threepence, sir. Please be quick, you are keeping people waiting.”

“Yes, yes, of course I’ll pay,” putting down a halfpenny—then, feeling in another pocket, another halfpenny.

“Now you have one penny ; let me see, that leaves one and twopence ? ”

“Yes, sir ; do be quick, please.”

“That is twenty-eight more halfpennies, what a lot it seems,” plunging into an outside pocket of his overcoat and producing another, then the ticket pocket of his overcoat and so on. All the time depositing on the ledge of the counter, his pipe and tobacco pouch, matches, handkerchief, gloves and other articles.

How the joke ended I never knew, for the model who accompanied Barnard felt so ashamed that he left Barnard still paying halfpennies for the teas.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME VICTORIAN STARS

**T**HREE Victorian stars whose brilliance outshone all other literary stars, but whose radiance is now dimmed by the passing of years and changing of thought, are Carlyle, Ruskin and George Meredith, all of whom I saw in their latter days. Carlyle I saw for the last time one day on the Embankment (he died in 1881) when I was visiting my old friend, Bram Stoker, Sir Henry Irving's secretary. "The Sage of Chelsea" was as usual smoking and star-gazing.

Ruskin, when I last saw him, was book-gazing at a shop in Garrick Street, and Meredith, old and decrepit, was fixed in his donkey-chaise near Flint Cottage, Box Hill, a handsome, picturesque old man.

"My old dexterities of hire quite gone,  
And nothing left for Love to look upon."

I had just been reading a criticism of Meredith's work in which I came across—"His novels are even now mostly for cultivated coteries. They appeal only to the consciously intellectual." Being conscious of not being over-intellectual, I passed by the Egotist and did not renew my acquaintance.

Thomas Carlyle, "the Sage of Chelsea," was in the habit of emerging from his house in Cheyne Row at

night and slowly walking along the Embankment, wearing a large soft-brimmed hat and long dark cape. He stopped every now and again to lean on the parapet and gaze on the river, or rested on a seat to puff his pipe.

Carlyle was the most intellectual eccentric of his day. Eccentric he was in appearance, in manner, in speech and in writing. At times he worked but little; he declared active exercise unnecessary, and he found that a journey to the City and back, in the old stuffy horse bus of the day, sufficiently shook up his liver. It has been said of him :

“ ‘ If the nature and condition of man be really and truly, not conceitedly and untruly, singular, so also will his manner be, so also it ought to be.’ It is not meet to decide lightly upon the merits or demerits of Thomas Carlyle as a writer of English. We all know that, apart from superficial affectations—or singularities—as they may be, he was a vigorous world-wielder and an original thinker. He was a hater of humbugs, a demolisher of shams, a pricker of windbags, a shaker out of bran; a genuine man, of generous impulses, honest hate, enduring affection and tender memories. Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to his characteristics and his influence and value as a man of letters, all thoughtful readers must admit their large indebtedness to him, and object to his mannerisms as they may, be forced after all to admit, in his own words, that ‘ on the whole, genius has privileges of its own; it selects an orbit for itself; and be this never so eccentric, if it is indeed a celestial orbit, we mere star-gazers must at last compose ourselves: must cease to cavil at it, and begin to observe it and calculate its laws.’ ”

R. Hengist Home, in *The New Spirit of the Age*, published many, many years ago, has much to say of Leigh Hunt, and also gives us an insight into Carlyle's verbal eccentricity, strangely akin to the story of Oscar Wilde.

"Leigh Hunt and Carlyle were once present among a small party of equally well-known men. It chanced that the conversation rested with these two, both first-rate talkers, and the others sat well pleased to listen. Leigh Hunt had said something about the Islands of the Blest, or El Dorado, or the Millennium, and was flowing on in his bright and hopeful way, when Carlyle dropped some heavy tree-trunk across Hunt's pleasant stream, and banked it up with philosophical doubts and objections at every interval of the speaker's joyous progress. But the unmitigated Hunt never ceased his overflowing anticipations, nor the saturnine Carlyle his infinite demurs to those finite flourishings. The listeners laughed and applauded by turns, and had now fairly pitted them against each other, as the philosopher of hopefulness and the unhopeful. The contest continued with all that ready wit and philosophy, that mixture of pleasantry and profundity, that extensive knowledge of books and character, with their ready application in argument of illustration, and that perfect ease and good nature, which distinguished each of these men. The opponents were so well matched that it was quite clear that the contest would never come to an end. But the night was far advanced, and the party broke up. They sallied forth, and leaving the close room, the candles and the arguments behind them, suddenly found themselves in the presence of a most brilliant starlight night.



They all looked up. 'Now,' thought Hunt, 'Carlyle's done for; he can have no answer to that.' 'There,' shouted Hunt, 'look up there! Look at that glorious harmony, that sings with infinite voices an eternal song of hope in the soul of man.' Carlyle looked up. They all remained silent to hear what he would say. They began to think that he was silenced at last—he was a mortal man. But out of that silence came a few low-toned words, in a broad Scotch accent. And who on earth could have anticipated what the voice said?—'Eh, it's a sad sight!'"

Thomas Carlyle enjoyed the reputation of being one of the great Victorian thinkers, if not the greatest of all. "The Sage of Chelsea" undoubtedly believed himself to be the greatest.

If Ruskin had done nothing else than espouse Turner, and write him into the first position of great English landscape painters, he deserves our gratitude, though his admiration for Turner may, at times, have carried him off his feet. Ruskin was in the habit of taking art students to the National Gallery, and halting before a large picture of Turner's he would select one square inch, and on this deliver a lecture, illustrating the extraordinary deftness of the painter, who into that one square inch worked such wonderful combinations of colour as only a supreme master of brush work could possibly do. Turner, hearing of this, went to the gallery to see the "one square inch." He looked at it for some time. "Ah! I remember how that happened," he remarked to his friend, "my brushes fell out of my hand on to the canvas and that is the smudge they made."



JOHN RUSKIN *à la* WHISTLER



It is not unusual for the literary superfine critic to glorify artistic smudges into masterpieces, and endow work with an artistic merit that does not exist, as the above incident illustrates.

Turner said of Ruskin :

“He knows a great deal more about my pictures than I do. He puts things into my head and points out meanings in them that I never intended.”

Ruskin was indeed a wonderful man, a delightful word-spinner and a terror to the art world. He began young, for his father, a Scotch wine merchant, supplied him liberally with money, and he went to Christ Church, Oxford, as a Gentleman Commoner. Previous to that, at the age of fifteen, he had attended a school in Peckham, kept by the Rev. Thomas Dale, and on his very first day he went up to the Rev. Dale :

“I carried my old grammar to him in a modest pride,” the great critic says, “expecting some encouragement and honour for the accuracy with which I could repeat, on demand, some hundred and sixty printed pages of it. But Mr. D. threw it back to me, with a fierce bang upon his desk, saying (with accent and look of seven-times-heated scorn)—‘That’s a Scotch thing!’ Now, my father being Scotch, and an Edinburgh High School boy, and my mother having laboured in that book with me since I could read, and all my happiest holiday-time having been spent on the North Inch of Perth, these four words contained so much insult, pain and loosening of my respect for my parents, love of my father’s country and honour of its worthies as it was possible to compress in four syllables, and an ill-mannered gesture.”

As soon as Ruskin had taken his degree at Oxford he

studied art under Copley-Fielding, and a year after produced *Modern Painters*, to prove the superiority of modern painters over old masters. Yet ere ten years had passed he espoused pre-Raphaelism and wrote at prodigious length to prove that old masters were superior to modern. His art literature was voluminous and varied. To the last his letters to the Press were vigorous and courageous. He figured in the Law Courts, he described Whistler as a charlatan, and as Whistler was considered such, obtained one farthing damages.

Ruskin, as I say, had money. He gave £5000 to endow a mastership of drawing at his old college, and supported many other things of not so practical a nature, a peculiar incident of which I can vouch for. A magazine published some of Ruskin's designs. "Of course I shall not accept payment," he assured the delighted editor. Then later he wrote, "As you have printed my drawings so badly, I shall *fine* you five guineas each drawing." Thus the spirit of the Scotch wine merchant asserted itself.

Ruskin, like so many Victorian men of letters, had an unkempt appearance. His nose was large, his mouth thick-lipped and flabby, and his receding chin was atrociously weak. Here is a sketch I made of him *à la* Whistler after the notorious trial, but never published.

Dr. Furnivall was one of the most distinguished figures in London for many years: handsome, upright, energetic, with flowing white beard and an abundance of white hair, which, whether from motives of vanity or of hygiene, he never covered with a hat. Bareheaded he strutted across Regent's Park, down Baker Street and along Oxford Street and Regent Street.

I have reason to know how eccentric he could be. For the first few years of my married life he was a neighbour of mine, and anything but a pleasant one. On a certain occasion he filled my letter-box with refuse as a form of protest, because he had lost his favourite cat, and suspected I had stolen it! At other times he stuck insulting notices on his neighbour's gate-post, and he generally behaved in a wild and unneighbourly fashion. He was a bookworm, and perhaps one of the most learned of Victorians—no doubt impressive in his own library, but perfectly impossible out of it. He was famous as a philologist and early in life secured a high reputation as a student of early and middle English literature. He then devoted his intellectual energies to the Early English Text Society, the Chaucer Society, the New Shakespeare Society, the Browning Society, the Wyclif Society, the Shelley Society, the Philological Society, and the *New English Dictionary*. With all these societies on his brain it was no wonder he could not wear a hat.

Mentioning the Shakespeare Society recalls to my mind one Sunday afternoon in 1880. The square in which both Dr. Furnivall and myself lived was suddenly besieged by a multitude of hansoms and four-wheelers, out of which many celebrities famous in literature, art and the theatre alighted at Dr. Furnivall's house—Iring, I remember, being among the number. In a little more than half an hour the door opened and out they all rushed, gesticulating, arguing and evidently on the verge of a fierce quarrel. It was one of the most amusing, though the most inexplicable, comedies I had ever seen. I was young at the time, and many years

passed before my curiosity was satisfied. When I afterwards met Irving, a little time lapsed before I felt justified in calling to his mind the extraordinary scene to which I had been witness. After a while he recollected the whole thing perfectly.

"Eh, my boy, the Shakespearean Society! Yes, yes! I remember we met at Mr. Furnivall's; the—ah—subject selected for us to discuss was the line: 'Duncan comes here to-night.' We couldn't agree, everyone got angry, we all lost our tempers—and, my boy, that was the last of the Shakespeare Society—so far as I was concerned."

Dr. Furnivall from his Cambridge days was an enthusiastic oarsman. He designed a boat in 1846, a replica of which was rowed by a professional oarsman, Ewell, when he beat the champion, Clasper (the only occasion he was ever beaten). He started a rowing club for working girls called "The Furnivall Sculling Club," and when he was eighty-six, an eight, or rather a seven, of girl members rowed him on the Thames, the old man himself rowing bow in a spin of six and a half miles. He dined at Richmond and pulled back to Hammersmith.

One of the great Victorians whose popularity has survived the last century is the author of that delightful book, *Alice in Wonderland*. Though he produced the equally popular *Through the Looking-Glass*, and subsequently *The Hunting of the Snark*, and *Sylvie and Bruno*, it is by the first he is best remembered. No man of the Victorian era wrote such genuine refined nonsense as the Rev. C. L. Dodgson—better known as "Lewis Carroll."



DR. FURNIVALI.





Lewis Carroll was a genius pure and simple. A clergyman, an Oxford man, an orthodox cleric and a typical Don to boot, yet he, in spite of his mathematical mind, proved himself an immortal humorist. In spite of having a mathematical mind, do I say?—It would be more correct to state that he owed his success in humour to his success as a mathematician. For his humour was not spontaneous; in himself he was a dull man, and his jokes, elaborately designed, were feeble. He had a peculiar twist in his brain that bent his mathematical mind towards some humorous side line of thought, taking him to he knew not where. He himself confessed as much :

“ I distinctly remember how, in a desperate attempt to strike out some new line of fairy-lore, I had sent my heroine straight down a rabbit-hole, to begin with, without the least idea what was to happen afterwards. And so, to please a child I loved (I don’t remember having any other motive), I printed in manuscript, and illustrated with my own crude designs—designs that rebelled against every law of Anatomy or Art (for I had never had a lesson in drawing)—the book which I have just had reproduced in facsimile. In writing it out I added many fresh ideas, which seemed to grow out of themselves upon the original stock; and many more added themselves when, years afterwards, I wrote it all over again for publication; but (this may perhaps interest some readers of *Alice* to know) every such idea, and nearly every word of the dialogue, came of itself. Sometimes an idea comes at night, when I have had to get up and strike a light to note it down—sometimes when out on a lonely winter walk, when I have

had to stop and with half-frozen fingers jot down a few words which should keep the new-born idea from perishing—but, whenever or however it comes, it comes of itself. I cannot set invention going like a clock, by any voluntary winding-up; nor do I believe that any original writing (and what other writing is worth preserving?) was ever so produced.”

Here the author confesses it took him two years—by mathematical progression—to turn that one thought, which meant nothing, into a work so unique and so elaborate that it still remained a mystery even to its perpetrator.

The fact that Sir John Tenniel, who so delightfully illustrated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, had, point-blank, refused to illustrate another story for the eccentric author, led to Dodgson asking me to take his place. When Tenniel illustrated Carroll's masterpiece I was about eleven years old. So it would seem that Carroll had to wait for me—not I for him. In the meantime he had written books of a different class to his “Alice” books, and tried various illustrators. But his last books—those I illustrated—both called *Sylvie and Bruno*, were a return to his first style.

If ever two men were by nature to work together, they were Carroll and Tenniel. Tenniel's clear, painstaking finish and irreproachable humour of grotesque figures and humanized animals (his children, “Alice” in particular, were not successful) were depicted exactly in the spirit of Carroll—or, to give him his real name, the Rev. C. L. Dodgson. Yet the latter informed me, in all sincerity, that, with the exception of “Humpty Dumpty,” he did



LEWIS CARROLL



not like Tenniel's drawings ! It was almost as surprising as if W. S. Gilbert had said he did not admire Arthur Sullivan's music, or vice versa ! But Carroll said so to me, and more than once. If Carroll had continued to work with Tenniel, as Gilbert did with Sullivan, there is no doubt that all his books would have been as successful as the two which they worked together. But, alas, Lewis Carroll the author and the Rev. C. L. Dodgson were two very different persons ! Tenniel could not tolerate "that conceited old Don" any more. Dear, gentle Tenniel was, perhaps, just a wee bit obstinate, and a tiny bit independent ; but still there never was anyone easier to work with.

When I told Tenniel that I had been approached by Dodgson to illustrate his books, he said, "I'll give you a week, old chap ; you will never put up with that fellow a day longer."

"You will see," I said. "If I like the work, I shall manage the author."

"Not a bit of it ; Lewis Carroll is impossible," replied Tenniel. "You will see that my prophecy will come true."

It was therefore in a way, as the acceptance of a challenge that I undertook the work. Carroll and I worked together for seven years, and a kindlier man never lived. I was always hearing of his kindness to others. He was a generous employer, and his gratitude was altogether out of proportion to my efforts.

He presented my wife with beautifully bound copies of both volumes, with an elaborate inscription of thanks, which I need hardly say I do not quote in any egotistical

spirit, but merely to show the manner of the kindly author :

PRESENTED TO THE WIFE OF  
HARRY FURNISS

by  
LEWIS CARROLL

in grateful recognition of  
the exceptional skill and  
the painstaking patient  
labour that have made this  
book an artistic treasure.

*Christmastide, 1889.*

The unconscious humour of the author's idea for pathetic pictures was a great relief to my difficult task of satisfying such a captious critic. Delightful and interesting as Carroll the author was, he unfortunately proved less acceptable when in the form of Dodgson the critic. He subjected every illustration, when finished, to a minute examination under a magnifying glass. His practice was to take a square inch of the drawing, count the lines I had made in that space, and compare their number with those on a square inch of illustration made for *Alice* by Tenniel! And in due course I would receive a long essay on the subject from Dodgson the mathematician. Naturally this led to disagreements, particularly when it came to foreshortening a figure, such as "Sylvie and the Dead Hare," which is a question for the eye, not for the foot-rule and compass. In fact, over the criticism of one drawing I pretended that I could stand Dodgson the Don no longer, and wrote to Carroll the author declining to complete the work. He replied pathetically, "It is a

severe disappointment to me to find that, on account of a single square inch of picture as to which we disagree, you decline to carry out your engagement." It was the square inch of the Don's mathematical mind I went for, and ultimately succeeded with the challenge Tenniel had thrown down.

Lewis Carroll began, as he says, by illustrating his own writings. To my mind his drawings to his parody of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and to the *Lays of Sorrow*, show much humour and talent. But as a draughtsman he was, as he himself admitted, hopeless, although he took himself so seriously as to consult Ruskin. Ruskin's advice, "that he had not enough talent to make it worth his while to devote much time to sketching, but everyone who saw his photographs admired them," might well apply to many artists to-day not so modest as Carroll, who wrote to me, when I acknowledged his first sketch—an idea for an illustration—as follows: "I fear your words ('I had no idea you were an artist') were, to a certain extent, rote sarkastic, which is a shame! I never made any profession of being able to draw, and have only had, as yet, four hours' teaching (from a young friend who is herself an artist, and who insisted on making me try, in black chalk, a foot of a Laocoon! The result was truly ghastly), but I have just sufficient of correct eye to see that every drawing I made—even from life—is altogether wrong anatomically: so that nearly all my attempts go into the fire as soon as they are finished."

It was therefore lucky that he found in John Tenniel an artist so exactly suited to him; in spite of what he said, Tenniel's work for *Alice* did nearly as much to



make its success as Dodgson's originality. Without any illustrations I doubt if these masterpieces would have been much heard of; certainly they would not have sold so well. If they had been badly illustrated, the result would have been fatal.

Lewis Carroll's work did not end with his writing, or even with the illustrations. He saw to the publishing as well—not so much, I imagine, in a commercial spirit as in an artistic sense. He paid for everything, and the books were published for him on the usual trade commission. Once, dissatisfied with the edition, I forget why—binding, paper, or ink—something I know the public could not discern—he publicly advertised the fact that he would send a new copy to any purchaser who had possession of one in this particular edition. But so punctilious was the author that he was quite unhappy at the thought that he had not “given the people of his best,” in every detail, from his own work to the lettering on the outside cover.

The eminent man who said, “Genius is the infinite capacity for taking pains,” started an absolutely wrong dictum, but one that has been for generations accepted as a truism. Surely genius is the very antithesis to laboured talent. As Dr. W. L. Courtney puts it: “A genius breaks rules or makes them for himself. In either case he is a stranger to technique, and without technical excellence there can be no ‘perfect’ artist. It is the man of admirable talent who can attain to technical perfection in the practice of his art. The genius is a rebel, with very slight regard for orthodoxy or the formally correct.”

I do not think, arguing from this basis, that we can



ALGERNON SWINBURNE



include among the real geniuses those who startled the world at a mature age—as did George Eliot. Genius asserts itself early in life, talent rises slowly. Keats was a great genius, had he only talent the world would never have known him, for he died young. Shorthouse had infinite talent, he produced his first book after many years of hard work. Dickens had produced two-thirds of his brilliant works within the same period of time ; but Thackeray, though a late starter, was more a man of genius than a man of talent, his early verse and sketches, when a schoolboy at Charterhouse, showed his prospective genius. Again, Thackeray was a rich young man, and riches are fatal to the development of genius. It was not until his money had gone did he do something great. He wrote *Vanity Fair*, by dint of pure hard work, and after reaping years of worldly experience.

Swinburne was certainly the most brilliant genius as a poet England has ever seen. He cannot be described as anything but a genius. Though endowed with all the queer ways of a master genius, he was not master of himself. I saw him now and then, when he was at the height of his fame, and perhaps the most discussed man of his day. It was about the time that Robert Buchanan published his attack upon the "Fleshly School of Poetry." Many and awful were the tales circulated round his various escapades. From De Burgh, a minor poet, and a great friend of mine, who flourished in the early 'seventies and lived in the same house as Swinburne at Bloomsbury, I learnt an interesting fact or two concerning this little understood genius. It was generally believed that the poet's transcendental flights of fancy were incubated under the influence of the flowing bowl.

De Burgh assured me that he had the word of his trustworthy landlady that her other lodger, the great poet, did not drink sufficient to upset a child. She, acting under the instructions of the poet's mother, locked up the dreaded bottle, and frequently De Burgh heard the "Master" calling over the banisters to the landlady in piteous tones for a glass of sherry.

"Well, only one, sir. I'll bring it up in a few minutes."

As time passed and it did not come, he crawled again out of his room to remind the lady of her promise.

"Bless his heart," said the lady to De Burgh, "I then let him have it—but it's 'arf water and couldn't 'urt a baby."

But it was sufficient for England's brainy poet. He lay for days on his bed. Proofs from his publishers strewed the floor, letters were unopened—all was disorder and confusion. Whether or not the occasional watered sherry was the cause, De Burgh could not say, but the poet was evidently, for considerable periods, lost to the world, until his good friend and adviser took him in hand. In time a lady—his mother, I believe—arrived in a cab, packed up the proofs under one arm and her son under the other, and disappeared.

Once I was in De Burgh's rooms, and he came in from his bedroom after washing his hands. I noticed "A.S.," the initials of the great poet, in the corner of the towel he was using.

"Those initials remind me, De Burgh," I said, "of Douglas Jerrold's remark about two-thirds of the truth."

"Ha ha! Well, only in one sense is that correct. He buys the towels and I use them. If I can't be a great poet, at least I'll be a clean one."

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME CURIOUS FINANCIAL PERSONALITIES

ONE of the most sensational financiers and company promoters of the Victorians was "Baron Grant," who in the early 'seventies was the most talked-of man in the City. His Emma Mine was a miniature South Sea Bubble; and both "Emma" and the "Baron" disappeared simultaneously. Late in the century he was pointed out to me at Bognor, where he died a few years afterwards. At the height of his fame he built a mansion at Kensington Gore, which, I have been told, he never really occupied, though I remember he gave one of the most magnificent, costly and improper entertainments of the Bohemian order on record. Everyone who was anyone was present, but very few knew their host. His marble staircase is now to be seen at Madame Tussaud's.

One of my earliest recollections of London is that of Leicester Square, in the centre of which stood the remnant of the "Golden horse and its rider," an effigy of George I, surrounded with weeds, old pots, kettles, dead cats and dogs, old boots and hats, filth and rubbish of every description. The horse and all that was left of its Royal rider was painted white, or whitewashed, and ornamented with huge black spots. It was then regarded as a great game for medical students to scale the hoarding around the Square, and ornament the broken statue,

sometimes in a way not fit to describe. The statue itself suffered one indignity after another; first the arms went, then the legs, and finally the head. This (partial) statue was the standing joke of London. The refuse heap, called a square, was a disgrace to the Board of Works, and as such was frequently brought before Parliament without, however, anything being effected. At last it found itself in the Law Courts, and after long and fruitless litigation, "Baron Grant" stepped forward, in 1873, and purchased the whole Square, at a cost (including laying-out the ground) of £30,000. This he opened with a tremendous flourish of trumpets in July, 1874, as an open space, and an ornament to London it has been ever since.

The cost was greatly increased by the frantic desire of the "Baron" to finish it by a certain date. Work was carried on night and day, by relays and gangs of men. The reason for this extraordinary haste puzzled many—until it was discovered that the inscription was carved with the name of Albert Grant and followed with the initials M.P. The very day after the unveiling he was unseated, for bribery, for Kidderminster, and knowing that this would be the case he wished to complete his task before he was deprived of his membership. One of his little bribes took the shape of a carpet. If elected, he promised to give the Kidderminster factories an order to make a carpet reaching from Kidderminster to Westminster. The lines :

And who for shady walks will give him praise  
For wealth thus spent when gained in shady ways?  
In short, what can he hope from this affair  
Save to connect his name with something Square? . . .

appeared at the time the Baron opened Leicester Square, and emanated from the Stock Exchange. When the Emma Mine swindle was exposed the versifier thus described the "Baron":

Titles a King can give, but honour can't.  
 Title, without honour, is a barren grant :  
 Sad, 'tis true, but a worse dilemma  
 To be without a title, like the Emma.

No King or Queen gave Albert Grant a title. His real name was Gottheimer, the "Baron" was a title bought from some obscure impecunious potentate.

Cecil Rhodes was one of the biggest Victorians. Big in person, big in mind, he did everything in a big way, and he liked everything to be big. The first time I saw him was on a Sunday morning in the Zoo. I was a Fellow of the Zoological Society for many years, and my house being situated near, I spent much time in the gardens, and there saw many notabilities. When I saw Rhodes he was, of course, standing before the biggest beasts in the garden, the elephants, and watching them with a keen intentness. He never noticed the smaller fry, including myself, who was sketching him. He had a contempt for anything small. When he called upon our most brilliant sculptor, Alfred Gilbert, at his studio in Maida Vale, to discuss with him his statue, for which Gilbert held a commission, he noticed, strangely enough, some most beautiful statuettes, in which Gilbert excelled. Laughing heartily, he asked Gilbert for what purpose were those "funny little things"? . . . Gilbert, an extremely impetuous man, and a great genius, who put finer work in the "funny little things" than any sculptor



living, was so enraged with Rhodes's ignorance, and lack of appreciation of his art, that he smashed them to atoms.

The two Miss Rhodes, sisters of Cecil Rhodes, used to visit us. The elder Miss Rhodes was a wonderful woman, short and stout, who dressed like a man, in grey suit, high collar and man's tie and hat. She was remarkably like her famous brother, with the same eyes, nose and mouth; and she admitted that she resembled him in manner and temperament. Her brusque manner hid a very charming and delightful personality. Her sister appeared to be more gentle and less dogmatic. She was her late brother's favourite, and was much with him in Africa. Among other interesting things, they told us that their brother Cecil detested the sight of inquisitive visitors, American and others. One day he was reclining on a sofa in his study, and, looking round, he observed some trippers had actually intruded on his privacy, and were staring curiously at him and his surroundings. He languidly touched a bell, and when his valet entered he said, "Tell these people who I am," and went on reading.

The sisters lived at St. Leonards in an old house which had at one time been a toll house, and was built partly over an arch spanning the roadway. It was a museum of South African relics, and included among other things a long ferocious-looking sjambok, which belonged to Kruger. Miss Rhodes referred to Dr. Jameson as "Jimmy," and often spoke of the wonderful way in which Jimmy cared for her brother, and how he foretold his end, somewhat tragically. Dr. Jim, returning from Europe, found Cecil Rhodes sitting on the balcony

chatting with some friends and drinking his usual gin and seltzer. Jimmy was very alarmed when he caught sight of Rhodes, and, raising Rhodes's eyelids, shook his head. Rhodes, observing this, at once said quite coolly, "How long have I got, Jimmy?"

"You may live ten days or a fortnight."

"Ah! Then I finish my story," remarked Rhodes, as he turned to the friends he was entertaining.

This house is now the winter abode of another famous man once connected with South Africa, Sir Henry Rider Haggard, the author, who lived at the time of the Majuba Hill catastrophe in a house close to where that tragedy was enacted.

Those who study the history of finance are well aware that wars are frequently brought about for financial reasons, and now and then, when war was not intended by the financier, it has been forced on a country by a financial clique, who by their business dealings jeopardize the good name of the country. I will not commit myself by saying which of these reasons brought about the unfortunate South African War. But there is no denying the fact that that war was the result of a staggering crisis, and became the cause of financial depression for years, and also that it has been made to answer for almost every failure. There were some people who never heard of the war, other than that old lady who, during its progress, stood one day at the fringe of an excited crowd around the newspaper office in Fleet Street and inquired what all the fuss was about, and being informed that it was news from the war, asked what and where was the war.

"In Africa, of course!"

"Dear me—are they fighting there?—Well, I *am* glad they have a fine day for it."

That the South African War was brought about by financiers exploiting the country, and by the ambition of our greatest and most successful financier—Cecil Rhodes—cannot be denied.

He may be remembered as the great financier, but posterity will acclaim him as our greatest Imperialist of the later Victorian era.

Another notorious Victorian character who did great things, and had a big financial career (and fall), was Jabez Balfour, the son of a marine-store dealer at Chelsea, who was also engaged in temperance and religious work in and around London. His mother was well known as a writer, and lecturer, on temperance and religious questions. He sat in Parliament as a Radical, for Tamworth, from 1880 to 1885, was returned unopposed for Burnley at a by-election in 1889, and lastly, by a large majority, headed the poll for the same borough in 1892. He had in the meantime been elected first mayor of the new borough of Croydon. Balfour was only twenty-six years of age when he formed the Liberator Building Society in June, 1868, which enjoyed a reputation in Nonconformist circles and among temperance folk as being as safe as the Bank of England. Jabez Balfour was regarded as a philanthropist and a Christian man, and his influence with religious people was prodigious. In 1875 another Association was hatched, the "Lands Allotment Company," with practically the same directorate, and Jabez as the controlling genius. Then followed in succession Hobbs and Co., the London and General Bank, the Building Securities Company, George Newman and

Company, the Real Estates Company and the Sheringham Development Company. In most of these concerns there was a regularly paid dividend of five per cent to the shareholders and four per cent to depositors. The recklessness of the financing was never surpassed. The system was simplicity itself. Each new company took over some of the liabilities of the old ones, and these were put down as so many successful transactions, severally yielding a handsome profit and splendid security—or, as the phrase went, “a large and noble property”—to the Liberator. In September, 1892, the crash came. The London and General Bank closed its doors. The Liberator Society failed. Balfour fled the country, one of the directors attempted to commit suicide, and three of the most prominent associates of Balfour were arrested. These were Hobbs and Newman the two builders who had been financed by the Liberator, and H. G. Wright, a solicitor. At the time of the failure, Hobbs (Limited) alone owed the Liberator over £2,000,000. Newman was sentenced to five, Hobbs to twelve, and Wright to twelve years’ penal servitude. Two brothers named Benham were also sent to gaol in respect of a forged will, on which they obtained £47,000 from the easy-going officials of the London and General Bank. On January 12th, 1893, a receiving order against the late M.P.’s estate was made, and on the 27th of the same month a warrant was issued for his arrest.

A portrait of the “Liberator,” issued in the *Hue and Cry*, represented a thin long-faced man with dark hair, moustache and full beard, and was about as much like Jabez as Jabez was like Arthur Balfour, M.P., now Lord

Balfour. So a caricature of mine, drawn in Parliament, was used and proved effective.

He was quite happy in the Argentine Republic and quite safe, running a brewery among other things, and running up expenses. Still, so long as he remained in a country which was not retroactive he was a free man. Alas, he became fascinated with an attractive woman, who cajoled him into a carriage and took him for a drive over the border, where the detectives surprised him! The woman was a decoy, and wife of one of the detectives.

Jabez Balfour's book, *My Prison Life*, is in truth as dull a book as I ever read—of its kind. Perhaps I am prejudiced, for long before Balfour was known to the man in the street he was well known to the Members of Parliament, and I made many sketches of him running in his funny little way through a division, or sleeping peacefully on the benches with his little legs dangling half-way to the floor. A red-faced, common little figure, and the very picture of contentment.

Among the Nonconformist Members of the House he was looked upon more as a god than a genius. Professor Thorold Rogers, a fine, big, loud-mouthed, rough, profane old Parliamentarian war-horse, was one of Balfour's directors. He died before the climax. I knew the professor well, and I got very tired of hearing of Balfour's genius and greatness.

Then there was a very intimate friend of mine, William Woodall—a member of the Gladstonian Government—another Nonconformist—a thoroughly straight, honourable, lovable man, whose great fault was that of believing everything everybody said, and taking everybody at their own valuation, rendering himself thereby

unfit for public life. The valuation he had of Jabez Balfour was immense—no doubt taken first-hand. How well I recollect his description of the thoroughly religious fervour of Jabez Balfour. What a good Christian he was! What a wonderfully generous man! Had he not built and endowed Nonconformist chapels, and did he not preach himself? What a genius in business! How he entertained all the M.P.'s at some fairyland place up the river—and yet how simple and unaffected was Jabez—and so on *ad infinitum*. This used to irritate me. And the dear godly man's sanctity was trolled out—even by the profane Professor Rogers, M.P. I felt even more irritable. And I predicted more than once that such a man would one day be found out. I never trusted psalm-singing financiers—and I never shall.

Jabez Balfour, in his prison book, when speaking of freaks in prison, had the temerity to admit: "There is surely no nation in the world more tolerant of oddity than the English, provided that the oddity has a political or religious bias. . . . There is, I verily believe, quite as much oddity deliberately assumed as there is oddity that is involuntary and spontaneous. Perhaps of all oddity, religious oddity is the most common. In other words, some may trade on religion, and of this I think there can be no doubt whatever."

Jabez Balfour was undoubtedly one of the greatest of all the Victorian oddities. Still, one must remember that those who trusted their money to his companies—the greater portion poor lower middle-class widows and helpless men—suffered far more than the convict did. It was said of him, as of Whitaker Wright and other sensational company promoters, that, with time, all

would have been well. So it is said of everyone who financially "comes a cropper." The question arises, who can one trust? One of the most sensational scandals of the kind was the exposure, trial and imprisonment of Benjamin Green Lake. Lake was a man at the top of his profession, the centre of many friends, a man regarded as of the highest integrity. There was the utmost astonishment when it was revealed that he had been engaged in wholesale misappropriation of trust funds. He was tried at the Old Bailey in 1901, and sentenced by Mr. Justice Wills to penal servitude for two periods, amounting in all to twelve years. The evidence disclosed that a large number of his clients had been ruined, Lake having converted thousands of pounds of trust funds to his own use. When he was adjudged a bankrupt in July of the year preceding his conviction, the deficiency amounted to £173,000. The comic side of the affair was that Lake had for a number of years been chairman of the Disciplinary Committee of the Incorporated Law Society, by which the malpractices of fraudulent solicitors were investigated!

After that, one may well ask, who can an outsider trust?

Whitaker Wright, when listening to the judge summing up dead against him, wrote on the blotting-pad in front of him, "Seven years, seven years, seven years." And thinking of these dismal years of hard labour—he committed suicide.

Which reminds me of two tragedies that startled the world of finance during the last few years of the Victorian era, and left a mark on latter-day finance that will not quickly be eradicated. One was the suicide

of Barney Barnato from the South African liner ; the other was the death by poison of Whitaker Wright at the conclusion of his trial in the Law Courts.

Barnato's death chiefly affected the South African market. The news came with startling suddenness ; while it occasioned surprise, it did not affect the public so much as did the end of Wright. For one thing, Barnato never belonged to the higher rank of financial men.

When newsboys tore through the streets of London yelling "Suicide of Whitaker Wright," hard-grained business men paused. Many openly expressed their regret ; many, too, ejaculated, "Poor devil" or "Plucky chap." Wright, although he was condemned to a term of imprisonment, had many friends whose implicit faith in him was never shaken. Certainly he was a financial genius. A man of good birth and excellent education, he turned his knowledge of chemistry to account when he was left penniless at his father's death. He was then twenty-one years old ; by the time he was thirty he was worth over a quarter of a million of money.

This genius, evil or otherwise, of the Globe companies and syndicates declared : "There never was any difficulty about my making money. I had a struggle at first, of course, as any young man without capital has, but after I made my first thousand pounds the rest was easy. In fact, it is my experience that any man with a fair insight into human nature, a clear head and absolute integrity, ought to make a comfortable competence, at least, if he can accumulate a thousand pounds." After the Globe crash, Whitaker Wright summed up the



whole position in a few words spoken with pathetic fervour : "Luck, luck," he said, "of course it's luck, if you like to call it such—these mining operations. Not one mine in a hundred pays. Anyone who knows anything and goes into a mining speculation ought to know that there is more than ever a chance that he will lose. If, on the other hand, he wins, he wins heavily. And yet, here is a part of the British public investing in the most risky securities in the world, and then, when a slump comes, they look on their speculative counters as if they were special deposits in a savings bank."

After a contemplative pause he went on : "All old financiers know that waves of prosperity advance like waves of the sea on an incoming tide, and that nothing can stop prices in everything from advancing ; nor can any human power check the recession of the wave when prices tumble and everything goes down in value. These cycles of rising and decreasing values no man can control, but it is through a keen insight into the causes that lead to these periods of prosperity and depression that shrewd men make millions and then are called 'lucky.'"

That last sentence pithily sums up the secret of success in commercial gambling. It comes from a great authority who concluded his remarks by saying : "That is the only trouble with me. I could not stem the tide of depression which followed the Boer War. I failed to accomplish the impossible. I gave up a fortune in the attempt, but I could not stand alone against the entire London Stock Exchange."

During the mining boom in the Far West, in 1879, Wright was distinctly unfortunate. "At Leadville," to use his own words, "I lost two fortunes—the one I



BARNEY BARNATO



invested in a mining property, and the one I didn't make by paying some other persons a song for an adjoining property. I don't believe in luck. It is all a matter of good judgment, a clear head and knowing how to take advantage of opportunities; but sometimes one cannot help thinking there may be something in luck after all. I suppose the only way to judge, though, is to balance up a man's account at the end of the year, and if he is successful on the average you can put it down to luck, for that comes only here and there and does not last.

"Well, about this luck in Leadville. I had a property in which my friends and I had invested a quarter of a million pounds. We had sunk shafts three hundred feet deep and had drips and levels in all directions, but we did not come upon any ore rich enough for the mining of it. Adjoining us was a property of fifteen acres, on which three-hundred-foot-shafts had likewise been sunk without satisfactory results. After the owners had spent close on a hundred thousand pounds, they wanted me to buy it, and offered it to me for almost anything I would pay, but one of our shafts had been sunk close to their boundary and I thought I knew what they had on their side.

" 'Gentlemen,' I told them, 'I wouldn't give you fifteen ha'pence for your fifteen acres.' Then they had to raise more money and work their property as best they could. Well, within three feet of where they had already gone they struck a vein of ore which paid them £600,000."

Strange and peculiar were some of Whitaker Wright's experiences of bulls and bears, both in the Near East and the Far West, but he never showed the white feather

He stood by his friends and fearlessly faced his foes. Yet it was the hug of the bear which closed his career.

Long years before this, however, an incident on the Snake River, in Idaho, made the speculator whistle for a new lease of life. The Indians were on the war-path and several parties of prospectors had been massacred near the spot where he was. An Indian and his bride pitched their tent near his shanty. Wright called to see them and noticed that they envied the good smoke he was having, so he took a big plug of tobacco to them.

He had hardly returned to his shanty when a war party of braves rode up. Their chief started for Wright's hut, and soon, no doubt, all would have been over and the scalp of the pale-face hanging at the saddle bow of the red-man, but that the squaw ran up to the leader's horse, caught the bridle and talked fast for four or five minutes. The Englishman never knew what she said, but the party rode on, and an hour later killed three of Wright's friends a few miles down the river.

Thus the creator of that commercial Frankenstein—the Globe—had his life spared on the strength of a plug of tobacco.

Colonel J. T. North, the "Nitrate King," was one of the most notorious and, as he certainly was, one with the cleanest record of sensational financiers of his time.

The son of a business man at Leeds, he worked hard as a youth in a large engineering firm, and thoroughly mastered the details of the work. Being also a shrewd young man he was selected by the firm to supervise the erection of some machinery in Peru. There he struck oil, or rather nitrates, and was clever enough to see the vast possibilities of his discovery. He remained, and



WHITAKER WRIGHT



built up an industry of his own, and also built a huge fortune, due to his own foresight, industry and business capacity.

On his return to England, stories of his fabulous wealth circulated, and made him the most sought-after man in the land. The power of the greatest singer, writer and artist is nothing in comparison with the reputation of such men. The greatest of all is he who has the gift of making money and assisting others to do the same. The vulgarity of the millionaire is always condoned. North was loud in everything. When he first kept racehorses the colours he registered were typical of the man. So loud were they that they caused a sensation—light blue, primrose, five-pointed stars, primrose sleeves and scarlet cap!

Although the "Nitrate King" was for a time a familiar figure in the racing world, I met him only once in that capacity, and when I happened to be in Leeds, Colonel North's native town. I was there making sketches for a new evening paper, started by the *Yorkshire Post*, of the British Association Meeting. I was attending the various meetings all day, and doing my drawings at night in order that they might be ready for the next day's issue of the paper. My rooms were in the same hotel as those of Colonel North.

On my last night at Leeds, I was working, as usual, late, when my door opened, and in burst a rubicund, prosperous-looking man, whom I at once recognized as the Colonel. Helping himself to some whisky and soda, he there and then invited me, somewhat inarticulately, to make one of his party at Doncaster the following day, giving me various details of the programme, to



which I paid, being deep in my work, very little attention, but I gathered something about "special reserved carriage—a specially merry meeting and a specially lucky day." After which he departed and I thought no more about the matter, for I felt pretty certain he was not in a state of mind to remember very much of it himself.

Having arranged to return home the next day, I was packing up my drawing paraphernalia, when to my great surprise the Colonel entered once more, his mind clear, though his glance was full of surprise. "What, going!" he exclaimed, when he had thought his invitation accepted. "Impossible!" But I informed him that my strenuous week's work had exhausted me, and I must return to London.

"What! not come to Doncaster!" he exclaimed. "Let me look at the man who will pass through Doncaster the day the Cup is run! I want to say I have seen such a man—that's all!"

The Colonel was luckier with his dogs than his racing horses. He purchased in 1888, for tremendous sums, a greyhound called "Fullerton," and another called "Thoroughend," and directly afterwards this pair divided the Waterloo Cup. "Fullerton" proved a wonderful greyhound; he won the blue ribbon of the Dog Derby three years in succession.

The "Nitrate King" enjoyed spending his fabulous fortune in horses and dogs, and building and good living. He lived not wisely but too well, and cut at times rather a ridiculous figure, especially in the capacity of a Volunteer Colonel. On one important occasion, when Royalty visited the City, he was in command of

the troops in Fleet Street. After the show was over, he had to withdraw his men. "Right turn, left wheel, as you were!" he shouted, the effect being that the gallant Volunteers butted each other in their endeavour to carry out their Colonel's extraordinary command. After several futile attempts to disperse his men he rose in his stirrups, and at the top of his voice gave that historic order: "Up Fetter Lane, you —— fools!"

With all that, the Colonel had for his business a phenomenal command of details and a never-failing memory, a very remarkable instance of which I may possibly have related before. When I was a guest at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, he made a bee line for my chair, and to my surprise introduced himself in the following words:

"I am Colonel North, you are Harry Furniss the artist. I say, you can't make much out of drawing, can you?"

"Not a living wage," I replied.

"I thought so. I'll send you some shares in my Tarapaca Bank."

I had not the slightest idea to what he referred, and also, I was sure, neither did he. About six weeks after our brief converse I received to my surprise a letter from his secretary informing me that the Colonel had ascribed, as promised at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, fifty shares at par, which would be sent on receipt of my cheque. Although he forgot his military formula, he evidently never forgot his business ones.

In making selections of notable Victorians I have endeavoured to make my choice cosmopolitan, and among the great personalities of that time there appears

the name of Sam Lewis, the money-lender. He was a man one met everywhere in town; and his wife was always a conspicuous figure in the Row. A schoolmaster thus described a money-lender: "He serves you in the *present* tense, he lends you in the *conditional* mood, keeps you on the *subjective*, and ruins you in the *future*." Yet it must be acknowledged there are, with money-lenders as with schoolmasters, widely different interests and methods. Most men nowadays pose as teachers, from editors to golf caddies. In the same way, nearly everyone is a money-lender. Your tailor's bill is nothing to your tailor's loans. He is your money-lender in disguise. So is your cigar merchant. Your wife's dressmaker or hairdresser is *her* money-lender, a fact you do not discover till the crash comes. The author has his "agent" (mere money-lenders in disguise), and the picture-dealer is to the R.A. much the same as the pawnbroker to the struggling artist. The French said we English were a nation of shopkeepers. The same critic might to-day alter that to—the English are a nation of money-lenders. We lend money all over the world, and, if the truth were known, *Who's Who* might well be a financial publication.

Just as the Rothschilds are the financiers of nations, so men of the stamp of the late Sam Lewis are the financiers of individuals. A people may grumble at the terms of a war, but as the money is needed for the public weal the matter invariably is allowed to rest where it began. Not so with a person. He borrows, just as a nation does, because he requires the money; he is ready to make any terms. When, however, he is called upon to pay the interest or repay the capital, he is very apt to lose

his head. Sam Lewis was a money-lender. He had many clients. Some treated him fairly and ever remained in his good books. A vast number sought his aid, and, having obtained it, proceeded at once to bite the hand that fed them. They suffered, for Sam was astute. He knew they would have to seek him again, and then he drove a hard bargain.

While in life Lewis won opprobrium—sometimes merited, often not—in death his name was received with respect, nay honour, by rich and poor alike. In life he squeezed, as a money-lender, five millions out of the rich who sought him in the hours of stress; in death he left two-thirds of that sum to the needy of all denominations. Well did he live up to and die for his motto: “I accept from the ‘lord’ and give to the poor.”

Lewis was a Jew of Jews. He was penurious, thrifty, calculating and astute. Like many of his race who have achieved great things, he emerged from the lowest stratum. He began his career in Dublin, selling small jewellery to the officers at the barracks. He carried his shop in his pocket. Next he went to London and there discounted bills for undergraduates at the ‘Varsities at 60 per cent. He prospered. His office in Cork Street became an institution. Many a secret was laid bare within its walls; many a noble skeleton was there brought from the ancestral cupboard. Sam lent—at rates varying from 40 to 110 per cent; he accepted assurances when he failed to obtain security; he kept a still tongue and waited and trusted. The clients with whom he had the largest dealings maintained business relations with him for years, and got to like him.

It is averred that the late King of Portugal pawned his royal crown to Sam Lewis. The late King of the Belgians, who, when he was not speculating with members of his own family, sought amusement by diving into the whirlpool of finance, did business for years with the Cork Street money-lender. Other Continental potentates had a weakness in the same direction. So far as our own land is concerned, it is well known that individuals of every degree in the peerage at some time or other sought the aid of Lewis, while Ministers of State, and those with a religious bent, did not hesitate to cultivate his acquaintance.

Though scorned in public, feared by many and hated by some, Sam Lewis had friends—men who realized his true character, with all its objectionable phases, and these friends were not a few. The money-lender had his good points, and *generosity* was one of them.

A young man, the brother of a Duke, owing to unforeseen losses and great depreciation in agricultural values, was reduced to sore straits. He was a man of honour, studious and highly respected in every walk of life. How he was to extricate himself from his awkward dilemma was beyond his comprehension. His intimate friend, also the younger brother of a peer, and a military man of distinction, heard of Sam Lewis.

“Why not see Lewis?” he said to the Duke’s brother. “Go to him without hesitation. Tell him how you stand and ask his advice.”

The suggestion was adopted, the situation relieved, and from that moment the money-lender remained a respected friend of the brother of one of England’s dukes.

It is the sequel, however, which is the most interesting joint in this incident.

Things went wrong financially with the military friend of the peer. He threw up his commission and quietly retired from his clubs and accustomed haunts. He was too proud to complain ; he would not borrow ; he nursed his troubles and told no man. Passing along the Haymarket one day, an elderly, stoutish, well-groomed gentleman of Hebraic persuasion addressed him quietly by name and asked him to walk with him along Panton Street. The officer was surprised. He did not know the person who had accosted him, and at first he was disposed to ignore the man. But there was something about the stranger and his manner which aroused his interest. He accepted the invitation. Then Sam Lewis, for the stranger was he, suddenly asked his companion why he had sent his friend, the Duke's brother, to the office in Cork Street, and then mentioned his own name.

"Well," replied the officer, "I could not help him and, from what I believed of you, I thought I could not do better than send him to you for advice."

"You did quite right," said Lewis. "But what about yourself?"

"Oh, I'm all right," somewhat testily answered the other, and turned to go.

"No, you are not," answered Lewis, who was well aware of the officer's circumstances. "Why don't *you* come to see me?"

"Never!" came the reply. "I have never borrowed and never will. So good day, Mr. Lewis." He turned on his heel and left the money-lender.

Next day's post brought a packet to the residence of the officer containing a sum of money so considerable that it cleared him of all difficulties. There was nothing to indicate whence it came, except a line to say it was from a friend who preferred to be anonymous.

Never for a moment did the officer imagine that his friend in need was the money-lender of Cork Street. It was not until three years later that he learnt the truth, and then only by his innate intuition of men and manners. He happened to be quite casually thrown into the company of Lewis, who expressed a hope that all was well with him. The officer recalled the remark of the money-lender about going to see him.

"You asked me, Mr. Lewis, why did I not call on you, and I explained why I refrained. Curiously enough I was in a tight place at the time, but I always set my face against borrowing. I know, however, that, had I sought your assistance, I should have been in safe hands. Next day I was, happily, placed beyond the necessity."

"Yes, yes," replied Lewis, as a smile wreathed about his eyes. "I understand."

And the officer understood too. The realization of Lewis's kindness deprived him for the moment of the power of speech; he could only shake the Jew's hand. An anonymous packet containing money with a note reached the money-lender's office in Cork Street next morning, and to the day of his death Sam Lewis had no firmer friends—not clients—than these two men of noble birth.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOME PARLIAMENTARY WITS

**F**UNNY men in Parliament may be divided into two classes—conscious and unconscious humorists.

The former may be illustrated by mentioning Bernal Osborne and Dowse in the old days, and the late Colonel Saunderson and Mr. Birrell of later Parliaments. The names of Major O’Gorman and other eccentric Members suffice for the old stock of unconsciously funny men, and even in a time nearer to our more matter-of-fact days we have had Mr. Field, Mr. William Redmond, Mr. Swift McNeill and a host of other unconsciously funny men, and these from the Emerald Isle alone.

The late Sir Wilfred Lawson’s humour is familiar to all, and so is Mr. “Tommy” Bowles’s. Lord Elcho (Lord Wemyss) when in the House of Commons for some time made a set funny speech on the eve of the Derby—in moving the adjournment; but truth to tell our Parliament was and is sadly lacking in humour.

At one time Mr. Healy was by far the cleverest wit in Parliament. His speeches were spontaneous, and they did not “smell of the midnight oil” as did Mr. Birrell’s and that other Scotch humorist, Dr. Wallace’s. Nor were they carefully arranged “impromptus,” like those with which we were familiar in the humorous speeches of Colonel Saunderson or the “Tommy”



Bowles type. Mr. Healy's genuine impromptus would fill pages. The best of them, by far, is one made at the expense of Mr. Chamberlain. "While the cat's away the mice can play," tersely remarked that (as a rule) unepigrammatic speaker, the Member for Birmingham, when referring to Mr. Gladstone's absence during an important period of the Home Rule debate. "And the *rats*," ejaculated Mr. Tim Healy. At which the Members on both sides laughed immoderately. When "Tim" was up, the House was ready for a good thing, though it might not always be to the liking of the Tory party, politically. His wit was appreciated by friend and foe alike. It is not only what he said, but the characteristic way he said it.

Colonel Saunderson was, when at his best, one of the funniest on the Tory benches. Another Irishman, Lord Charles Beresford, was not intentionally so funny—nor so bitter or declamatory as was the Colonel. But he was the handy-man with a humorous speech in a curious mixed-up-apparently-unconscious humour of captious criticism, and his speeches were always a welcome relief to the dull debates. Like Sir Frank Lockwood, his breezy, good-natured appearance had a great deal to do with the effect produced. I never heard Sir Frank attempt to make a funny speech in Parliament—his politics rather seemed to depress him. But in place of verbal humour his clever caricatures amused the benches, and his funny speech was merely "taken as read." His biographer, Mr. Augustine Birrell, on the other hand, carefully prepared a humorous lecture in place of a speech.

On an important occasion, a quiet, inoffensive new



**BERNAL OSBORNE**



Member, resting upon a bench in one of the corridors of the House, waiting to take part in a late division, and imagining, no doubt, that he was retiring to bed, kicked off his boots in an absent-minded way, and then fell fast asleep. Some Members of the funny order came along and stole the slumbering Member's boots. Loud rang the division bells, louder the voices of the officials calling "Division!" The Member awoke, and in his white-socked feet stood on the cold paved passage. "Who has done this?" he shouted. Having been a working man, and having made his pile "roughing it" in distant lands, he so far forgot himself as to pour forth language not generally accepted as "Parliamentary." The funny M.P.'s informed the irate bootless member that the culprit was the Tory Whip, Lord Arthur Hill. The greatest merriment was caused by the thought of the six-foot-two Sir Arthur (the bewildered Whip who was absolutely innocent of the whole affair) being chastised verbally by the irate gentleman without boots, and the picture of the gentleman in his large white socks insufficiently covered by the rather short trousers made a sight to be remembered for years.

Among the unconsciously funny Victorians in Parliament was the late W. H. Smith.

I have it on the best authority, in fact from the man who delivered the request to Mr. W. H. Smith that he would sit in Parliament, that Mr. Smith, at the moment he received his call to political life, was marching about his establishment in the Strand, his coat off, and books under his arms. Mr. Smith never really put his coat on again. Even as Leader of the House, or Minister in Attendance on Her Majesty, he was always in his shirt-

sleeves. With him it was business first and politics afterwards. And it was just his solid business qualities which made him so valuable, and so universally admired. He worked hard as a politician, and sacrificed his health for his party.

Some politicians succeed by their oratory alone, others by sheer bounce, many by simple social virtues, but Mr. Smith succeeded by smiling :

Let Tanner call him "Saxon Ass," and every other name that's vile,  
Let Healy dub him "Brazen Ass," and nicknames rude upon him pile,  
Let Labby sneer at "Smith & Co." who sells his paper by the mile,  
He answers not by word or deed, he has for each and all a smile.

Labouchere, who looked upon the House as his playground, merrily cracked his little jokes, which were to be found enlarged in the pages of *Truth*. In common with other Members around him, his chief sport was "taking a rise" out of the Leader of the House. Mr. Smith lay low, merely putting up one colleague after another to receive the bowling from the Radical benches, from the courtly Sir Michael Hicks-Beach to the diplomatic Baron Henry de Worms. If heckling continued, Mr. Smith would rise and say: That in duty to his Queen and Country, he must ask the House to proceed with the business on the paper.

In spite of the respect ungrudgingly paid by the House to W. H. Smith, he was, nevertheless, fair game for chaff. "Toby," of *Punch*, constantly made merry at W. H. Smith's expense, always referring to him as "Old Morality," and said that, "The House of Commons, which delights in its leader, Mr. Smith, by

some curious twist of mind, insists upon regarding him from a humorous point of view."

The most ridiculously funny man was Dr. Tanner, who in the Autumn Session of 1895 created a scene—no uncommon thing in those days of high-explosive politics—after being "named" by the Speaker for giving the lie direct to another Irish Member. After "naming" it is necessary for a Minister to "move" the Member's suspension. Mr. Chamberlain happened, at the moment, to be in temporary command of the House, and it fell to his lot to formally "move." But the irrepressible Tanner would not move. He sat defiantly, in his place, jauntily wagging his head. The Speaker rose and called upon the Serjeant-at-Arms to see that his orders were obeyed. Mr. Gossett (Assistant Serjeant) walked up to Tanner. The House was silent with excitement. Tanner looked daggers and would have pierced them with the Assistant Serjeant's sword, had he had it. Tanner rose with deliberation; but instead of leaving the House he sauntered down the gangway, and paused. Then suddenly he rushed over to the Government Bench, as if to pulverize Mr. Chamberlain, but, stopping within a couple of feet of the isolated Minister, pointed his finger at him, and yelled at the top of his voice, "Judas! Judas!" He retreated, with a strategic movement down the floor, still facing Mr. Chamberlain, still with outstretched arm and finger, pointing and ever repeating, with increased fury, "Judas! Judas!" each time in a louder, shriller, ascending shriek. When he reached the Bar he turned sharply on his heel, and made a violent dash like a mad bull into a group of assembled Members. Pushing the astounded legislators

aside, he caught one of the Honourable Members by the collar of his coat, bellowing, "Out of my way, none of your nonsense," and vanished.

Another Irish politician who was the cause of a scene in the House was Mr. Dawson; one of the funniest figures that ever sat in Parliament. He was a very diminutive Member, with a very exaggerated idea of his own importance, which he enforced with dramatic emphasis. I remember making a sketch of him for *Punch*, as little Gulliver, with the giants—Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright and Mr. Forster (I think)—all looking at him. It must have been an historic occasion when Mr. Dawson rose and in the highest flight of melodramatic art assured the House that, if the Protection Bill of 1881 should pass, trouble of all sorts would ensue, and the lives of the beautiful women in Ireland would be in jeopardy. Then, striking an heroic attitude, he assured the House, "if you lay a hand on my wife, it will be stepping over my dead body." He caused another scene of much merriment in the House by appearing at the Bar as Lord Mayor of Dublin, with a petition to present, dressed in his robe of office with a gold chain around his neck, and a mace-bearer in attendance. A great deal of this kind of mummery takes place in the House of Commons, and as a rule Members pay no heed to it, but should anything so absurd as the incident described above occur, it causes excitement and much amusement.

But the funny man in Parliament—the man who possesses wit and lives to raise a laugh at any cost—happily does not exist.

Scenes in Parliament may have produced merriment

at times. The rules of procedure in Parliament lead to the ridiculous.

Perhaps the most humorous scene that was ever witnessed by Parliament, in the Victorian period, was on the occasion of the introduction of the Home Rule Bill by Mr. Gladstone. The centre of the floor of the House was filled with rows of chairs, and every seat, every step, every inch of room on the floor of the House, in the galleries, doorways and gangways was crammed. The prelude to this afternoon was remarkable. Some of the Irish M.P.'s, so as to secure their seats, wrapped themselves up in their railway rugs and slept on the benches in the House, placing their cards in their places when they awoke the following morning. I sketched the scene at the time for *Punch*. In my "Humours of Parliament," I recalled the fact that a certain Tory wag entered the House when the Irish M.P.'s were asleep—as they frequently are on the train journey backwards and forwards to Holyhead—and awoke them all by calling out: "Tickets, please! All change here for College Green," and that a certain Member for Ireland, whose imagination had carried him into mid-Channel, was heard to murmur faintly, "Steward!"

All this humour, however, has vanished. Irish comedies in Parliament have ceased.



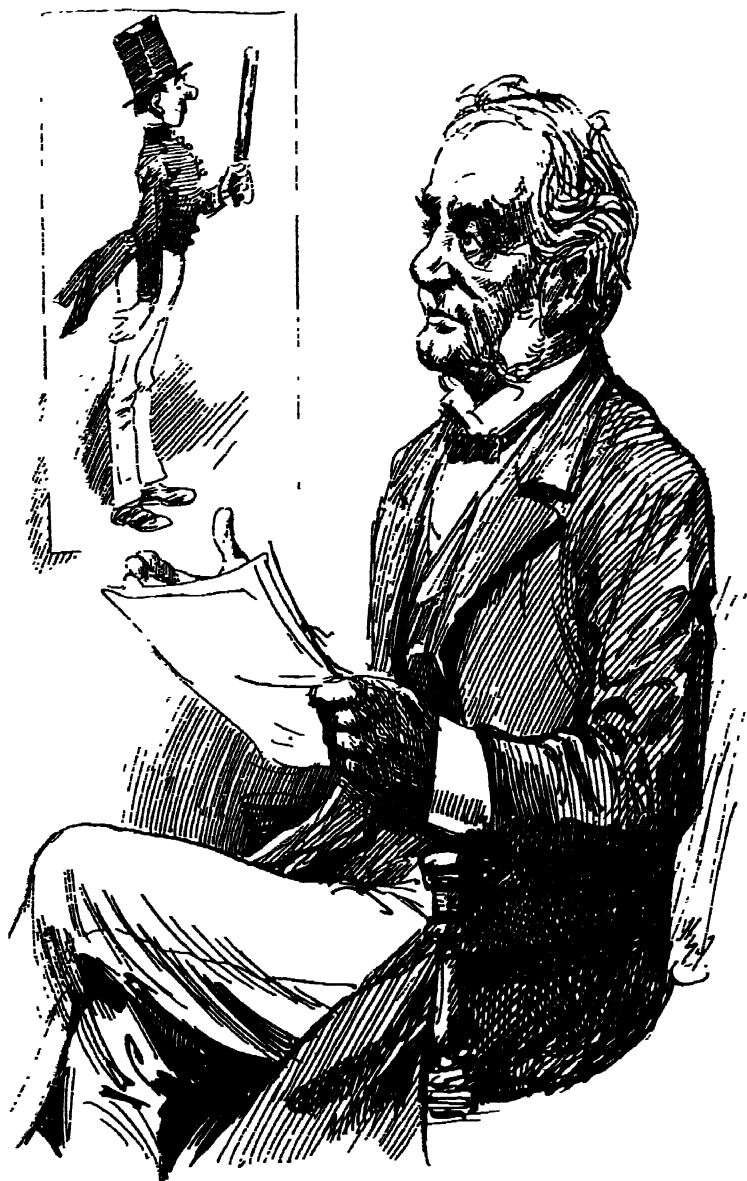
## CHAPTER X

### THE POLICE : A GREAT VICTORIAN INSTITUTION

UP to the time of Sir Robert Peel (1830) that old adage, "Set a thief to catch a thief," might have been applied to the system, or rather utter lack of system, which obtained in England. Now England can boast of the very best police force in the world, the envy of all other countries. But before the days of Peel we had none, though other countries were more or less supplied with protection.

During the highwayman period, when crime with violence was of daily, almost hourly, occurrence, the public was left to fight the evil single-handed. When a robber was arrested, even for the most trivial offence (punishable now by a fine of five shillings or a week's lodging), it meant possible torture and certain death.

This hysteria of the law (if I may use the expression in lieu of finding a better to explain the almost comic terror and unreasonable behaviour of those in authority in the "good old days") led to crimes of misdirected justice. Therefore one would have thought that the introduction of a system of properly trained guardians of the law would have been welcomed by the public, many of whom were unduly suspected and wrongly punished. But the outcry was great, and the system condemned. To Sir Richard Mayne the credit



SIR RICHARD MAYNE



is due of the making of the London policeman the efficient official that he is now.

That the uniform of the "Bobby" and "Peeler" (an evident play on the name of Sir Robert Peel) mitigated against their popularity must be admitted. There was an absolute lack of humour in those responsible for the dress of the police. Anything more absurd than the tall hat, cut-away blue coat and white trousers could hardly be imagined. Ridicule all but killed the force at first.

"Ze Lord Mare" used to be the chief example of English greatness in the eyes of the foreigner visiting London. But there have been many instances to prove that of late the greatest admiration, not only of the Continental stranger, but of Americans and other visitors, has been reserved for the London "Bobby." For many years he was the butt of the humorist, both in comic press and on the pantomime stage, and much amusement was roused at his expense by Mr. W. S. Gilbert in his comic opera. Now the reverse obtains. The "Bobby" of to-day is a very different article from the original "Peeler" with his side-whiskers, tall hat, blue coat and white trousers. This direct follower of the old Bow Street Runner was Sir Robert's idea. After him came the long-coated and long-bearded "perlice," at whom John Leech and other caricaturists poked so much fun. Then the Charles Keene type followed, "fat and scant of breath." Now we have the "Inspector," and the respected preserver of the law and order, a class that stands much without flinching, except the one thing—ridicule.

Sir Richard Mayne was not only one of the great

pioneers of the Victorian era—the originator of the police system, as I have before stated—but, perhaps, the most successful of all chiefs of the police. He had troublesome times with which to deal—the riots in Hyde Park and other great public disturbances—and these he put down with a firm hand: by what the humorists called “Mayne force.”

Sir Richard’s work was continued by Sir John Henderson, but he was not so successful as his predecessor, and he bungled the Trafalgar Square Riots and some other affairs.

The late Serjeant Ballantine had not a very good opinion of the West End police when first instituted and certainly he had an experience which illustrates the comic side of the, then, arrogant force. Late one night in Piccadilly, Ballantine came across a policeman struggling with a drunken woman. She had either been thrown or had fallen down, and the policeman who tripped over her was being hooted by a derisive group of onlookers. The eminent counsel touched the officer lightly on the shoulder, saying, “Why do you not spring your rattle? You will hurt that woman.” The policeman sprang up and seized the barrister by the collar, shouting, “I take you into custody for obstructing me in the execution of my duty!” The Serjeant-at-law remained passive. In the meantime another constable arrived, and very roughly bundled off the unfortunate woman, just as the Attorney-General, Sir Alexander Cockburn (afterwards Lord Chief Justice), came upon the scene. Seeing a woman, as he thought, ill-treated, he remonstrated indignantly with the officer, who at once seized him, saying, “I arrest you too!”



SIR JOHN HENDERSON



"Arrest me!" exclaimed the astonished Attorney-General of England. "What for, pray?"

"Oh," said the captor, "for many things. You are well known to the police."

With the concurrence of the Attorney-General, Serjeant Ballantine sent a full account of the affair to Sir Richard Mayne, the Head of the Police. All he received was a snub, written by a subordinate, but nothing else transpired.

That surely was a comic scene—a leader of the Bar, the Government prosecutor in criminal cases, and the Attorney-General collared by a common or "Covent Garden" policeman.

But more comic still, the woman, who by the time she neared the station had six policemen hanging on to her, managed to wriggle away and escape. So Ballantine had no chance to speak as a witness in Court, as no prisoner appeared.

One of the hardest-working and most brilliant heads of the Criminal Investigation Department for many years was that eminent Victorian, Sir Robert Anderson, K.C.B. One would conclude that close work, long hours, and searching into the morbid side of life, would have left an official absolutely saddened and hardened to the sunny side of life. But Sir Robert proved that familiarity with crime and criminals have the opposite effect. He threw off the chains of office when he appeared in public as an entertainer. "Warm-hearted and jocular, ever ready with a quip and a joke," I have seen him described, when giving in public his entertainment, the subject being "Professional Crime and Professional Criminals, and How to Stamp out Both."



His great joke, it appears, was one he wished to be taken seriously: "Why do we imprison criminals at all?" That was the question asked by the man chiefly responsible to the Government for the close confinement of prisoners. It was considered a great joke, at least officialdom thought so, for we are informed that "Sir Robert entertains what are called peculiar notions about crime and criminals, and the method by which they should be treated by the State. His views do not exactly accord with those of some of our best-known criminal judges, and Home Secretaries have been known to disregard his advice." In other words, Sir Robert looked at the comic side of crime, which means that he looked at the human side. Criminals were generally regarded as dangerous enemies of society, whereas they were but light-hearted, spoilt professional geniuses, with a sense of humour which our prison treatment never reformed, but rather aggravated. "Why do we imprison criminals at all?" asked Sir Robert, and he replied, "Three reasons are generally quoted. First, it is said to punish, secondly to deter, thirdly to reform. But why should we punish criminals? We live in a Christian country. I am never afraid to proclaim myself a Christian. I believe in the Great Assize at which God will be the Judge of all, and He will punish. There is no reason why we should punish criminals. To deter whom? The professional criminal who committed the crime? You have already locked him up, and when he comes out you know he will go back to crime. You won't deter him. Then is it to deter others? Some say it is to deter the poor. From my long experience of criminals in London I say that that is a scandalous slander upon



SIR ROBERT ANDERSON



the poor ! One of the miracles of London is the honesty of the poor ! There is no need of penal servitude or the gallows to deter honest men from committing crimes. But, you say, it is to reform. To reform whom ? Would it not be better to reform people who are not criminals ? I ask again, why do we send criminals to prison ? There is only one intelligent answer to the question, and I am glad that answer is making way. We send criminals to prison in order to protect society." He would not send them to penal servitude : he would send them to what would be called asylum prisons. They should work hard, and he would enforce discipline ; there should be as much liberty and as large means of mental and moral improvement as would be compatible with that discipline. He would open these prisons to all the influences of Christianity and philanthropy, there should be lectures and addresses, and he would offer no objection to an occasional sing-song, or anything else of an elevating character. Sir Robert and other humorists—sometimes called cranks—who became sentimental in their wish to abolish punishment, or to make it fit the crime in a (comic) sense, should consider the effect of such leniency.

I do not know what kind of palace Sir Robert had in his mind's eye for the "asylum," but there are confirmed criminals to-day who consider prison good enough as it is. For instance, a man called McCormick was charged at Enfield, early in 1908, with maintenance arrears, which he admitted. When sentenced to two months' imprisonment, to be suspended for a month to give him an opportunity to pay, McCormick said prison was no punishment to him. When he last served a month, he

added, they kept him so well that he gained no less than a stone in weight.

The police were not all saints in the Victorian days, any more than they are to-day, but as a whole they were a fine body of men. Not only the police, but the police magistrates, however, were severely handled by the captious critics of the Press. Police magistrates, fortunately, are not thin-skinned—they are picked from the Bar, and do honour to their calling. They are sympathetic in spite of the fact that they deal only with the seamy side of life.

For years the late Henry Labouchere in the pages of *Truth* made a special feature of criticizing magistrates. He sat in his office and posed as a censor of the Bench, accepting statements of sentences without always knowing the facts underlying the cases. The London "Beak" is a clever, hardworking, conscientious member of the Bar, and he has to use his judgment in putting down crime. He deals with the scum of society "known to the police." A blackguard living a detestable and evil life, cruel, dishonest, pernicious in every way, is continually mentioned in cases, but the Court is powerless to touch him. He evades the law—others suffer. One day they have him on some perhaps trivial charge. He knows, and the police know, he deserves more than the law can give. He gets six weeks for stealing, say, an orange. This may be an impossible case, but it serves as an illustration of my point.<sup>6</sup> Some poor dupe this same wretch has cheated in business, ill-treated and lived upon, gets off with a caution. The magistrate knows, the police know, and the prisoner knows, but outsiders who write to editors do not know why one

gets six weeks and the other nothing. The sentences are placed side by side in the censor's papers, and London is invited to laugh at the magistrate.

Captain Shaw, Chief of the London Fire Brigade, was the most plucky, the most picturesque figure in the Metropolis, beloved and admired by all. The hero of every street arab and the welcome guest of every hostess in Mayfair, for many years the "Fire King" of London ruled supreme.

I happened to be seated next to him at dinner, in a private room, at the Reform Club one evening, and found him one of the most charming and entertaining of men. In appearance he resembled a French general; in manner a polished diplomat. He seemed too ideal a type of man to fight the flames. A suggestion of Don Quixote, a somewhat romantic knight-errant who rescued maidens from prisons in place of old ladies from top windows in Peckham Rye. He told me that one day he was sitting for his portrait, in his uniform and helmet, when his trap in which he answered the "Call" rushed up to the house, as word was always left where he might happen to be. He jumped off the painter's platform, to the astonishment of the artist. The practised ear of the sitter knew the pace of his official gig: "That's for me. I am sorry," said the Captain, "to disturb your work; perhaps you would like to come with me?" "That I should," replied the painter, snatching up his cap and following.

"It was a pretty good blaze," added Captain Shaw to me, "and as there were a few hours more of daylight I drove the artist back to his studio and he resumed my portrait. He repainted my face. He

told me that my expression, and even the colour of my flesh, was different from what it had been before. But this occurrence of a fire did not upset my nerves half as much as it did the artist's, for he spoilt the portrait. I looked as if I were dead, and the portrait which promised to be a great success was so ghastly it was only fit to be in a fire. . . ."

To which I subjoined that I thought him mistaken. "I know that artist," I said, "and he is not easily upset by anything. I venture to think his eyes were affected by the glare of the fire. For that very reason painters never look at a fire, but have closed stoves in their studios."

"Really," exclaimed Shaw, "I have not heard that theory before. I see more fire than most men and I can always observe the difference between claret and champagne in my glass, and not only that, but the difference, say, between the colour of Pol Roger and Heidsieck."

At that moment the hall porter came in quickly to the Captain and told him he was wanted.

"Would you like to put this to a test?" he whispered to me. "It's only round in Regent Street. Perhaps it's only a chimney," he added. "Another time—here is my card—you can get through with that when there is anything you want to see."

I remained, and did not mix my Pol Roger with Heidsieck, but I soon regretted not going with Captain Shaw, for this fire happened to be one of the most extraordinary affairs. The fire occurred in the Waxwork Show of Tussaud, not the old and original Tussaud, but the rival Exhibition run by one of the same family in Regent Street. The waxwork figures as they melted

assumed the most ludicrous forms. No Harlequin caricaturist could have possibly played such tricks. Wellington's nose sank into the counterpart of an ant-eater, the Sleeping Beauty was transformed into a jelly-fish. Irving as Hamlet melted into tears, each tear a foot long; Mr. Gladstone's face disappeared into wax collars; the Siamese Twins became one, in feature and form; and from the Fat Boy in Pickwick rivers of wax floated over the pavement. Crowns fell into the flames as quickly as did the Crowns of Germany and Austria when the Allies won the War.

Not only Judges but Magistrates and Counsel write their reminiscences. It has become a practice of late years, even for men who have done "time," to endeavour to prove as soon as they are out of prison—or, as in the case of Bottomley, before—that "time is money," by writing and selling their experience and opinion of convict life. With very few exceptions this is their first appearance as writers. It was so in the case of one ex-convict who published the inevitable tirade on prison discipline, who went one better than the rest of his class and actually applied for aid to the Committee of the Authors' Benevolent Fund, claiming his right on the publication of that book!

By far the most interesting of all such publications are the reminiscences of the "Hanging Judge."

Sir Henry Hawkins, afterwards Mr. Justice Hawkins, later Baron Brampton, will always be remembered as the "Hanging Judge." His two volumes of *Reminiscences*, which I have read carefully, strike me as being compiled and published with the sole object of showing that the Judge did not deserve any such cognomen, and



that he was most reasonable, most humane, even sympathetic and tender-hearted. In nearly every chapter there is an allusion to the "Hanging Judge," and an effort to disprove the charge, backed up with all the artifices of the special pleader—or pleaders. For the volumes are the first work of the late Judge in collaboration with a lifelong friend of his, who sandwiched the Judge's original manner with comments of his own, interspersed with newspaper cuttings, to prove that Mr. Justice Hawkins did not deserve the popular appellation. After reading through the volumes, one can easily see that Hawkins had a tender spot in his nature: he loved his dog. So, by the way, did Bill Sikes, and the roughest scoundrel in the Black Country with the blackest record will starve his wife and children to feed his "dawg." But in spite of the bright volumes of reminiscences, Sir Henry Hawkins will still be known to the public as the "Hanging Judge."

I never spoke to Sir Henry, though I knew him well by sight. I never knew anyone in my life who came before him, either as a witness or as a prisoner. So I am absolutely without prejudice in the matter. I have always taken an interest in the study of criminality, and I have followed Mr. Justice Hawkins, his conduct on the Bench, and also his summings up, and whilst having the greatest admiration for his adroitness, cleverness and thoroughness, it was quite evident that he deserved the title given by the public. One has only to read his own explanations to see that underneath his zeal on the Bench was the spirit of detection, that he was always the prosecuting counsel ready to land the prisoner on the gallows. To use his own phrase, it was

brains against brains, and he was not going to be beaten.

If "'Orkins," as he was so fond of referring to himself, had not been a great criminal judge, he, to judge by his own entertaining pages, would have been a great criminal.

The whole of his two bulky volumes are thick with the stories of his own cleverness, trickery, artfulness, his unflinching and unblushing audacity ; as a "sport," an advocate, or a judge, he always had the best of them all. The great Judge, one can see, revelled in retailing his artful dodges in all spheres of life.

His greed was well known. He was always "on the make" and seldom, if ever, "on the give"—except to give a heavy sentence. Towards the end there is a change, leaning towards cant, and eventually the clinging to some creed—for salvation. "'Orkins" as such an upright clever judge was certainly a great loss to the criminal classes. He had in him everything necessary for the making of a first-class rogue, and possibly that is what made him so successful. One would possibly have missed this, had he not confessed as much in his book.

There is no doubt Hawkins owed his great success, firstly, to the fact that he was a thorough man of the world, and, secondly, a man with a keen sense of the ridiculous. There is one short chapter in the second volume of his reminiscences in which he has given, with much humour, a description of "the pompous Sheriff of Devizes'" ostentatious display when he was on circuit.

"Everything concerning him was on a large scale, so that when we went to church and the offertory was collected, instead of the unassuming little crimson bag

at the end of a stick coming round, indicating that only a proportionate amount of your income was expected, they brought to our pew a receptacle almost as large as an old clothes-bag, and capable of holding your salary for the whole year."

Mr. Justice Hawkins relates how the pompous Sheriff extracted from his pocket a *bank-note*, "which he dropped into the capacious reservoir of Christian Charity."

The Judge more quietly slipped in a threepenny bit !

In the vestry the bag was opened by the churchwardens. The bank-note, says the wary Hawkins, "*looked like mine.*" When the bag was shaken and the wretched threepenny bit dropped out, the churchwarden (according to the Judge's chaplain, who was present) cried :

"D——n that High Sheriff !"

"'Orkins" follows this little dodge of obtaining credit for benevolence by another scene, also laid in church when the bag was brought round.

"All eyes were upon me, I knew, and had I not known, I should have felt. I understood them ; they were anxious to see *what the Judge would give*" (the italics are his own). On this occasion the Judge pretended to be much occupied in singing the hymn. "I was singing like a robin," he writes, "'From Greenland's icy mountains,'" a hymn he had heard many times before, and those icy mountains gave him, he declares, a cold shudder. On this occasion they served to give the cold shoulder and nothing else to the churchwarden who was passing the bag (a particularly inviting one, lined with white satin trimmed with red). "It is wonderful how one's attention may be engrossed by delightful music," adds the Judge, and this little comedy he performed in broad

daylight on a raised dais, in the presence of the whole congregation.

He gave nothing !

Like all men who leave the Church of England to join the Romish Church, he sneers at the clergyman and praises the priest. A few pages on he relates an incident when cross-examining a priest, "a good old prosaic Roman Catholic priest giving evidence as to the value of a chapel and premises a railway company was taking, while I appeared for the company. In cross-examination I adopted the line of respectful flattery, and thought I was getting on very well, for the priest was as affable as I was ; he seemed to agree with all I said, until the thought seemed to strike him that he was rather giving his people away. Then he turned upon me, and, looking up with a grave and demure countenance, said :

" ' Please, Mr. Hawkins, pay me less compliments and more money ! ' "

He gives great credit to the priest for his cleverness. It was the forerunner of the priest's getting the better of him at the end. He devotes his last chapter to " Our Chapel," which he built for the priests, at a cost far greater than the threepenny bit he gave the poor clergyman at Devizes.

Mr. Justice Hawkins tells of his horror of draughts, but he does not publish the story I have often told on the platform, of a certain judge, Mr. Justice Keating, I think, who " took a rise " out of Hawkins over his faddism.

Judges suffered, counsel suffered, jurymen fainted, witnesses writhed in agony, the officials gasped for breath. It was the hottest day of the year. Yet the

selfish Hawkins smiled and had every window and door of the Court kept closed.

So one day Keating told him that he had had a dreadful dream. He dreamt Hawkins was dead.

"I say, Keating, none of that, please ; that's no subject to joke about," pleaded Hawkins, who had, I believe, a great fear of death.

"Well, let me finish," went on Keating. "Yes, you died—and you were to be cremated at Woking. We were all to go down to see the last of you, but, alas, I overslept myself and arrived by a later train, just as our brother members of the bench were returning. However, I went on to the crematorium determined to see *something* of you—my dear friend—and I bribed the attendant to let me look in. So he pulled back a little metal disc about the size of a five-shilling piece, enough to put my eye to. Oh, the heat ! It was dreadful ! But I peered in again, and there I saw a little pile of white ashes, and from those ashes came your familiar voice, 'Keating, Keating ! Shut that door ; there is a draught here ! !'"

The last story I heard of Hawkins is one I have never seen published. It came to me first hand, but as I am not certain of legal procedure I may be wrong in the run of the story. The gist, however, is, I think, thoroughly characteristic of "'Orkins" of old.

The incident occurred when he became Baron Brampton and was received into the sanctity of the Peers' Chamber, with a seat on the highest tribunal in the British Empire—the Court of Appeal in the House of Lords.

The other great men sat in solemn conclave. The case

was a simple one. The verdict was so evident that, from Lord Chancellor downwards, the Lord Justices all said as much in some perfunctory sentences, and left it to the youngest, Lord Brampton, to give the verdict of the Court. Baron Brampton's old spirit of mischief and chance of "taking a rise" out of someone was irresistible. If he did not give a verdict—as the last to speak—there wouldn't be one given at all!

So he simply said that he could add nothing to what the other noble Lords had said—and walked off!

Justice Hawkins remained on the Bench to a very advanced age, hanging on. Apropos, "Trying Time" was the subject of a cartoon of mine published in 1898 when 'Orkins was eighty-one.

Long before Justice Hawkins there was a well-known judge whose name has not been handed down, but who also was always known as the "Hanging Judge." It is said that he was never seen to shed a tear but once, and that was during the representation of "The Beggar's Opera," when Macheath got a reprieve!

The same Judge happened to be sitting at a legal lunch next to the celebrated Irish wit, Counsel and Member of Parliament, Mr. Curran. The Judge said to Curran, "Pray, Mr. Curran, is that hung beef beside you? If it is, I will try it!"

"If you try it, my lord," replied Mr. Curran, "it is sure to be hung."

A fragment from my diary:

1880, *November*. Chrysanthemum Show, Temple Gardens, made sketch for *Illustrated London News*.

When at work sketching the flowers (and imagining the figures), the Courts rose, and several legal men

strolled through the tents. One of them, whom I did not recognize, whispered in my ear: "You had better be quick, here comes Hawkins, and he is sure to have all their heads off."

Richard Bentley was the best type of the Victorian publisher, and a unique character. There was no "and Co." about his business. Engraved on the door-plate of his publishing office, in Burlington Street, was simply "Mr. Bentley." He was a courteous gentleman, a delightful personality, and a great publisher, and his name appeared on the works of the most famous authors of his day, including Charles Dickens, for it was in *Bentley's Miscellany*, then edited by Dickens, *Oliver Twist* appeared, and at the same time *Pickwick* was published by another firm.

Dickens had, according to Percy Fitzgerald, who was personally acquainted with all the parties concerned, agreed to edit his *Miscellany* at a salary of £20 a month, and a thousand pounds for two novels, *Oliver Twist* and *Barnaby Rudge*. But soon after *Pickwick* was completed, and the great reputation of Dickens spread abroad, he naturally felt he had made a poor bargain, though Mr. Bentley had every right to regard it as final. Dickens, however, asked for £1500, and Bentley agreed. Dickens in return declined to edit the *Miscellany* and made fresh arrangements with his books. He asked £4000 to be paid for *Barnaby Rudge*, to which Mr. Bentley agreed. Then Dickens declined work with Mr. Bentley as he had better offers elsewhere, so his generous publisher, much to his credit, put aside all his claims, which represented huge sums (£2250), and permitted a rival publisher to reap the profit.

Mentioning *Sketches by Boz* and the *Miscellany* suggests another notable Victorian—George Cruikshank.

George Cruikshank was, in his own sphere, as great a personality as Charles Dickens. He was twenty years older than "Boz," and a firmly established public favourite, when, as Sala puts it, "the young reporter on the *Morning Chronicle* (Charles Dickens)," with whose baptismal name (be it remembered) his readers and admirers were as yet unacquainted, "had the assistance of Cruikshank, whose designs sold and re-sold the *Sketches by Boz*." In fact, the young author, Dickens, admits in his preface that the artist Cruikshank piloted him into fame.

"Unlike the generality of Pilot balloons which carry no Car, in this one it is very possible for a man to embark, not by himself, but all his hopes of future fame, and all his chances of future success. Entertaining no inconsiderable feeling of trepidation at the idea of making so perilous a voyage in so frail a machine, alone and unaccompanied, the Author was naturally desirous to secure the assistance and companionship of some well-known individual who had frequently contributed to the success, though his well-known reputation rendered it impossible for him ever to have shared the hazard, of similar undertakings. To whom, as possessing this requisite in an eminent degree, could he apply but to George Cruikshank? The application was readily heard and at once acceded to; this is the first voyage in company, but it may not be the last."

It is, therefore, an indisputable fact, chronicled by Dickens himself, that the artist Cruikshank piloted him into fame.



The second ascent of the "Boz" balloon was made with Bentley's *Miscellany*, "Boz" to edit and Cruikshank to illustrate. The song of the cover, representing a balloon in which "Boz" and Cruikshank are seated, has been sung before :

Bentley, Boz and Cruikshank stand  
Like expectant peelers :  
"Music !" "Play up !" pipe in hand  
Beside the *fluted* pillars.

Boz and Cruikshank want to dance—  
None for frolic riper ;  
But Bentley makes the first advance,  
Because he pays the piper.

The first thing "Boz" and Cruikshank threw out, to lighten the car and send up the balloon, was *Oliver Twist, or The Parish Boy's Progress*.

What happened in that balloon no one can tell; whether its rising higher and higher was due to the initiative of Cruikshank throwing out sketches to lighten the car, or to the imagination of "Boz" making the balloon rise above the heavy atmosphere of the commonplace, I cannot determine, even after reading carefully every reference to the unfortunate dispute.

Cruikshank stated that he suggested *Oliver Twist* and that "Boz" wrote up to his designs. Dickensians flatly deny this, and Forster characterizes his claim as a deliberate untruth. For my part I cannot help thinking that, as Cruikshank waited thirty years before publicly claiming the authorship, the probability is in favour of Forster's opinion. Still, something may be due to Cruikshank's suggestions. The second title of *Oliver Twist*, for example, *The Parish Boy's Progress*, savours

more of an artist's title than an author's; certainly more of Cruikshank than of "Boz." But what of that? Cruikshank's work speaks for itself, and all give him credit for his clever etchings. But let Dickens have credit at least for the writing.

There is no humbug, no cant about Charles Dickens, and as it is here only one man's word against the other's, I have not, nor can my reader have, the least hesitation in naming the one whose word is to be believed.

I remember, when I was twenty-two or twenty-three, meeting Cruikshank at supper. He was then about eighty-four, and he died soon after. He held up a decanter of water and shouted to us young men to follow his example and drink nothing but that, and to show what he could do at his age, he danced a hornpipe. But it only made me think of the dance he must have led poor "Boz." Apart from Cruikshank's delusion that he wrote *Oliver Twist* and that Charles Dickens only added a little literary touching up, W. B. Frith, R.A., wrote of Cruikshank :

"He would see, or fancy he saw, a resemblance to an old lady friend of his in one of his characters in *Chuzzlewit* or *Nickleby*, or some other of the serials then in course of publication, when he would say to Dickens : 'I say, look here, Mrs. So-and-so has been to me about'—Mrs. Nickleby perhaps—'and she says you are taking her off. I wish you would just alter it a little, the poor old girl is quite distressed, you know.' This Dickens told me, and added : 'Just imagine what my life would be if George was making the drawings for *Dombey* instead of Brown, who does what I wish and never sees resemblances that don't exist !' "



All that can be said of the Cruikshank productions is this—they suited their time and the days of the “Dog Dramas” at the Old Vic and the Dramas at the Old Adelphi Theatre known as “The Tinsel Period.” Now all is dead and buried, but the amateur and collectors still look upon Cruikshank as unsurpassed in graphic art. He was a clever etcher and an ingenious designer, and had the great fortune to illustrate great authors from Sir Walter Scott to Charles Dickens, but he was not happy with either of these tasks. Ainsworth and his tinsel theatrical romances suited his style exactly. Cruikshank’s heroines are, as I have somewhere remarked, all Houndsditch Jewesses. He had no idea of female grace and could not draw a pretty face, nor, in point of fact, anything refined. His humour was grotesque, the exaggerated types of the Gillray and Rowlandson era. The only feature of his work worthy of posterity is its technical side, and this vanished when he sacrificed everything on the altar of faddism and teetotalism. His famous Bottle Series are artistically poor stuff. Though a large section of English people, with an ignorance that is astounding, collect Cruikshank’s work vigorously as priceless gems of British art, yet his work was merely stereotyped and mannerized.

In those days such artists as Cruikshank saw life only as reflected images of their own brain. They did not look to nature and draw from models, in fact, Cruikshank prided himself on never “making a sketch of anyone.”

But this is digression—I was forgetting Richard Bentley.

I had not long been in London when Mr. Bentley sent for me to illustrate a new and complete edition of

his celebrated *Miscellany*, a delightful proposition, and one over which I was as keen as he. We had some pleasant meetings; discussed the details at as pleasant lunches. But I was too busy at the moment to do the work, and he died not long after, and his successor did not carry on the idea. Subsequently the name of "Mr. Bentley" and the business ceased to exist.



## CHAPTER XI

### CHAPLAINS AND LORD CHANCELLORS

THE extraordinary number of great ecclesiastics is alone sufficient to stamp the Victorian era as exceptional. The names of Newman, Manning and Pusey recall the furious conflicts connected with religious thought, the upheavals and unrest of that extraordinary period. Both Newman and Manning were Victorian giants and great actors on the Ecclesiastic Stage, but my personal acquaintance was, strictly speaking, confined to the Parliamentary clerics.

The House of Commons has had many distinguished chaplains, and in my time, as artist to *Punch*, there were three remarkable men who held that office. The first was the least distinguished but the most popular. He was a vicar of a church with a fashionable West End congregation, including many rich old ladies. The vicar was a "sport," but there cropped up some scandal about money matters, and he left both the parish and the House of Commons.

I made much of him in my Parliamentary drawings in *Punch*, for he was quite as important a figure of St. Stephen's as Mr. Gladstone or Sir William Harcourt. No scene in Parliament was complete without the chaplain. He was a little man with a prominent nose and a massive head of black curly hair, and he had side-

whiskers and a very prominent chin. A genial man, a humorist, and a Bohemian at heart, he enjoyed giving suppers at his club in Piccadilly to the leading actors, artists and literary men, and very merry gatherings they were ! He passed away from Parliament under a cloud, and after a few years he returned to London ; the hair on his head was thin, and, as he had grown a large beard, no one recognized him. He was very well connected, and came into an Earldom before he died.

The next chaplain was Dean Farrar, the very antithesis of the popular vicar. He had been a schoolmaster, and somehow contrived to look the schoolmaster, every inch of him, when addressing the "Boys" on the benches of the House.

The third to fill the office of chaplain was Canon Wilberforce. He certainly looked the part to perfection. He had a certain dignity which both his predecessors lacked ; also he had a beautiful voice and a pleasant manner.

Canon Wilberforce, according to his biographer, the Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell, owed his appointment at Westminster to meeting Gladstone at a Liberal gathering in the rectory grounds of his church at Southampton. Wilberforce as a young man had been a keen political worker, and was known to Gladstone as the son of his intimate friend, Bishop Wilberforce, and the grandson of "slavery" Wilberforce. It has been said of him that being born in the purple he was bound to come to the front, although "his brain power was only moderate. His erudition was slight, but he had that indefinable quality called personality which counts," and it might be added that he was a typical Victorian—an excellent actor.



When he became Canon Wilberforce of Westminster Abbey, he gave rise to a good deal of comment by entertaining in the crypt, with a smoking sermon, the workmen who were engaged in the alterations of the Abbey, which alterations were necessitated by the Coronation ceremonies of King Edward. The worthy Canon being a strict teetotaler would not permit any liquid refreshments which were not absolutely innocuous.

I fear he must have been horrified on one occasion, when King Edward, then Prince of Wales, was personally conducting the Czar over the historic edifice during the height of a phenomenally hot summer. The exertion proving a little too trying for the Royal pair, the Canon in charge made no bones about it, but promptly sent for a decanter of brandy and some small sodas. Soon the unwonted sound of popping corks resounded through the aisles of the venerable pile. If the same thing had occurred later, perhaps Canon Wilberforce would have invited his august visitors to partake of a bottle of Belfast ginger ale, which as a thirst quencher may be very grateful and comforting refreshment, but which could not be regarded as a beverage fit "to set before a King."

When I was a guest at one of Canon Wilberforce's luncheon parties at Dean's Yard, the footman, who evidently knew me, asked if I would have ginger ale or ginger beer, half whispering in my ear, "It is the best we can do for you, sir, but it is difficult to be funny on it."

To touch, no matter how lightly, upon the legal luminaries of the Victorian period would require a special volume to itself. Though the same might well



CANON WILBERFORCE



be argued in the case of the other celebrities of that remarkable epoch, unless the subjects were confined, as are mine (with but few exceptions), to the personal, or to those with whom I have some personal connection, thus limiting to a comparatively few representative men. And the title of my book, to be absolutely correct, should not be *Some Victorian Men*—but *Some Men of the latter part of the Victorian Era*.

Among the great Victorian Lord Chancellors, undoubtedly the eccentric and most versatile Lord Brougham is best remembered. I have, to use a Parliamentary term, “in another place” dealt fully with that extraordinary personality.

Following Brougham we had less eccentric occupants of the Woolsack, but no inferior lawyers; the greatest of all, perhaps, was Lord Cairns. Cairns was Disraeli’s Lord Chancellor. He had a fine legal head and brain, but was, in social matters, somewhat narrow-minded. His son and heir became engaged to a pretty actress, a lady to boot. But the fact of her being on the stage was beyond the acceptance of the straight-laced parents, and they paid £10,000 down, on the understanding that she would renounce their darling son.

Lord Herschel was another great lawyer; unfortunately he was also a great eater—at least it was to the latter cause his death was attributed by more than one person, one being the manager of the hotel at Washington, where Lord Herschel had paid a visit previous to mine.

Viscount Halsbury was perhaps the most extraordinary of all the Lord Chancellors, both in appearance (Lord Brougham excepted) and in the performance of his

duties. He stuck to the Woolsack longer than any other Lord Chancellor, and reached a ripe old age, remaining as alert, as clever, as any young man to the very end. I made many caricatures of him for *Punch* and other publications. His abnormally large head, ruddy complexion, rotund little body, short, squat bandy legs were irresistible temptations to my pencil. In 1889, I published an open letter to the genial Viscount, apropos of celebrities with swelled heads, part of which runs as follows :

“ A man who has reached the lofty position of Keeper of the Queen’s Conscience and second subject in the Realm, has nothing further to hope for, and might therefore be excused an attack of Swelled Head, even of a comparatively virulent type.

“ But there is something so genial in your Lordship’s appearance that no one can aver that this insidious disease, which works such havoc among the leading public men of the day, has really made any very devastating inroads on your Lordship’s pericranium.

“ The Inns of Court are aware that your knowledge of the law is exceptional, and that, had you been a Gladstonian Lord Chancellor, you would have been acclaimed by the Radical press as the greatest, as you are the soundest, lawyer of the day.

“ As a counsel you were most successful, and the judgments which you have delivered have shown that as a lawyer you are not to be surpassed. It is doubtless very annoying to your Lordship that a silly fiction should have been put about, but at any rate it has rendered my task all the lighter, as it has prevented your Lordship’s head from bursting your Lordship’s Cancellariate wig.



VISCOUNT HALSBURY



“Another point which the Radical press is fond of harping on is your supposed predilection for appointing your relatives and friends to judicial and other posts which fall within your Lordship’s patronage. It is certain that your appointments, with one or two exceptions to be noted hereafter, are as good as those of any other dispenser of patronage, and have been amply justified by events.

“And if, after all, some persons connected by ties of relationship or friendship with your Lordship have been placed in snug berths, where is the great harm? The relatives and friends of a Lord Chancellor would have much reason to complain did not their propinquity enable the august one to see their merits more clearly than is possible for the great unthinking public, which looks at matters from afar off.

“No such self-denying ordinance has ever been practised by the leaders of the Radical Party, and it would indeed be a bad thing for the public service were the clever connections of clever men to be tabooed and forbidden to serve the State because one of their relatives has surpassed them by a year or perhaps a month in acquiring the gift of patronage.

“Nor shall I be disposed to hold that the pride which apes humility is an alarming symptom of your Lordship’s Swelled Head. You are not too proud to go down into the Courts and do journeyman’s work when the inadequate stock of judges we possess has run short owing to the assizes or the influenza.

“This is an admirable trait in your character, and may perhaps be ascribed to a feeling that a man in your august position is above comment, and can do what



lesser men might feel to be beneath their dignity. An exaggerated sense of your own importance has never been a marked sign of the disease in your Lordship's case.

"Perhaps a more serious symptom is that which you share with most other Lord Chancellors. It is a curious fact, caused it may be by the Lord Chancellor's proximity to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Tables of Precedence, that holders of your high office have always of late years exhibited a tendency to become possessed of what I may call the Sunday-school teacher's cast of mind.

"This was evident in a remarkable degree in the late Lord Cairns, and Lord Herschell was also inoculated with it. In your Lordship's case the tradition has been carefully kept up. It is, no doubt, a sort of return for the compliment paid to the Bench of Judges by the Archbishop when he sits as head of an Ecclesiastical Court on some recalcitrant clergyman.

"The idea is ingenious, and shows that the mind of all Lord Chancellors work in a common groove which is not exactly that of other men.

"On the whole, on examining your Lordship's career attentively, it seems to me that your attack of Swelled Head is of a mild character, and that your Lordship has been saved from a severe enlargement of the head by an excellent sense of humour. . . ."

The Victorians were so rich in eminent lawyers that it is quite impossible to make a selection. They were not only great lawyers but had great individualities, individualities which in some cases bordered upon eccentricity.

Barristers are wont to have their own little jokes

between themselves. One of these most treasured by the members of the legal profession is a joke Serjeant Ballantine had at the expense of his friend, Sir Henry Hawkins. Hawkins was, as I have already pointed out, more than a "careful man," he was a money grubber, and with not one, but two eyes on the main chance. He made the largest amount of money of any man at the Bar.

Ballantine, on the other hand, was a spendthrift, a happy-go-lucky, let-us-be-merry-to-day kind of fellow. These two men were great friends on the same circuit, but as different as is Aberdeen from Paris, not only in characteristics, but in appearances. Hawkins was a little, hard wiry man with close-cropped hair, and no hair on his face—a firm, hard legal face. Ballantine was a sensuous, early Victorian, foppish, good-looking man with weepers, and long hair brushed and oiled round the temples. He had a man-about-town aspect. The two met after the Long Vacation.

"What have you been doing?" asked Hawkins.

"Oh, doing the Continent, and the Continentals doing me, and a jolly holiday I have had too."

"Well," said Hawkins, "I have not stirred from town, and have got through lots of work."

"What is the use of it, Hawkins?" said Ballantine.

"You cannot carry your money with you, and if you did it would soon melt."

Hawkins did not carry it with him; he left it to the Catholic Church. Poor Ballantine had nothing to leave.

The greatest of all Masters of the Rolls was Sir George Jessel, a Jew with a wonderful brain. It is said he never had one of his judgments reversed. The only thing that

puzzled him was the letter H. A patent case came before him concerning an invention for an air machine. "Wait a minute," remarked Jessel, "do you mean the 'air of the 'ead or the hair of the hatmosphere?"

We have had fewer legal wits, but a goodly sprinkling of raconteurs in our time. Although I have met the late Lord Bowen at several dinner parties, I was unlucky not to find Lord Morris at the same tables; for Bowen, to use a theatrical phrase, "fed" Morris, and Morris pelted the company with Irish chestnuts.

Lord Bowen had too great a sense of dignity to become a judicial humorist when on the Bench. At the same time it was with reference to the Law that he made perhaps his wittiest remark.

When a committee of judges met to draw up an address to Queen Victoria on the occasion of the Jubilee, it was suggested that the document should begin: "Conscious as we are of our unworthiness." One or two of their lordships demurred to this phrase, as showing perhaps an excess of humility. "Couldn't we say," interrupted Bowen, in his thin, precise voice, "conscious as we are of *each other's* unworthiness?"

Jowett had the highest possible opinion of Lord Bowen, and often regretted that he wasted his abilities in merely becoming a Judge before he was forty-four, and a Lord Justice before he was fifty, instead of taking to politics and making himself Prime Minister. Yet Lord Bowen aspired, after his retirement from the Bench, and still a comparatively young man, to Jowett's place as Master of Balliol, and he probably would have filled it had he lived.

## CHAPTER XII

### A FEW GREAT ACTORS

**P**OLITICIANS, authors, artists, by their speeches, their writings and their paintings, reveal the man behind his work. When death has laid by the tool, we can still judge these results and gain some insight into the life that is past.

The actor is but a tradition. His voice, his gesture can only be recalled by those who saw him act. He did not write, he did not speak his own words; of all the professions his is the most difficult to realize—afterwards.

And judging by present-day criticisms, criticisms of the past can have but little value. Now there seems an utter absence of proportion. All are great. Whereas we of the Victorians know that there is certainly not one to compare with the great ones of that period.

To gain any true impression of actors we must therefore get in touch with their contemporaries. From old theatre-goers I have gathered that the greatest English actor of the Victorian era was Robson. He was a comedian, but of such extraordinary versatility that, after making his audience roar with laughter at his genuine humour, he would the next moment move it to tears with his pathos.

F. R. Brownhill, to give Robson his real name, died in distressing circumstances in his forty-third year (1864),

and it is safe to say that, since Robson, no comedian has arisen with whom we can compare him. Wright had a great reputation, and, later on, dear old J. L. Toole, who founded himself on Wright, and became very popular, a fact largely due to his geniality and irrepressible fun off the stage, his practical jokes and, above all, to his friendship with Sir Henry Irving. "Irving and Toole," though diametrically opposite in taste, talent and nature, are the two inseparable names among the Victorian actors. Irving has already become a tradition as a great Victorian; in Phelps we count another.

It has been said, in all seriousness, that if Irving had not been a great actor he would have been a great ecclesiastic, as it was said of Gladstone that had he not been a great politician he would have been a bishop. This analogy is truer of Gladstone than of Irving. The latter was not a college man, in fact he was not, strictly speaking, an educated man, nor a writer such as Garrick. His "learning," the apparent emphasis with which he "elevated" his profession, was pure camouflage. He was at heart a Bohemian. The club supper table and not the society dinners appealed to him. Possibly the idea that he was naturally destined for a great divine generated in his wonderful assumption of such characters as Richelieu and Becket, which parts he played with perfect dignity. But then he was only repeating the words of others; surely an Archbishop must write, act and preach his own.

Irving was a wretched speaker. His set speeches at banquets and other functions were written for him, and he read them from the printed slips so cleverly that only those seated near detected that the words were not



IRVING AS BECKET



spoken extempore. When called upon to speak in an ordinary way he could only express himself with difficulty.

Samuel Phelps in some respects proved himself a more important actor than Irving. He was a teacher, and trained many a young actor who afterwards became famous, particularly in Shakespearean parts. Irving claimed no followers even among his greatest admirers. His personality, doubtless, influenced them greatly, but his manner was peculiar to himself, subtle and probably too eccentric.

I have asked more than one experienced actor (and actors are not by any manner of means indiscriminate worshippers of Irving!) what they considered the finest piece of acting they had ever seen. They all submitted one example. That of Irving as Charles the First, and in the Third Act, when the King, at the Scottish camp at Newark, war-worn and unstrung by mental anxiety, discovers the base treachery of Lord Moray. There was something extremely expressive and grand in the King's sorrowful rebuke to the cowering shrinking traitor, something magnificent and touching in his movements as he drew his sword for Cromwell's officer to receive it. Irving's acting in this was the high-water mark of genius which no other actor could approach.

Sir Henry Irving acted the learned brainy student of literature. He amply fulfilled the part as the leader of his profession, and was a keen advocate for its advancement, while at heart, as I have already said, he loved the simple vagabondism of it all. When walking with him one day, in Edinburgh, he pointed out the spot where once stood the old Theatre Royal. "And there, my boy, I was roasted as a witch in a pantomime for



fifteen shillings a week." He always travelled (as I have published in some reminiscences of mine) with his own gridiron, on which he himself cooked his chops for supper, and I know many other instances of his love for pure Bohemianism. That was the true Irving unknown to the public. In his theatre he was an absolute autocrat and an almost cruel martinet, a man of intense will power and so exacting a taskmaster that nothing escaped him.

To all men he was equally polite and courteous, but he was severe when occasion demanded. At times one might almost say his severity (always, mark you, in the cause of art) was torturing. A blunder in his eyes was a crime; like Napoleon he dealt sharply with stupidity. Napoleon remarked to a penitent general, "Sir, your fault is worse than a crime, it is a blunder."

When rehearsing "Becket" at a provincial theatre, a chair that should have been placed by a table in the centre of the stage was missing. He stopped the rehearsal and sent for the head carpenter, who was brought, trembling, before all the actors and actresses.

"What is your name?" asked Irving.

"John William Popple, sir," stammered the unfortunate man.

"Then, John William Popple, please bring the chair I should have found, here, by this table. Now bring pen, ink and paper. That's it! Sit down, take this pen and write: 'I, John William Popple, promise to see that a chair is placed, centre down, o.p. side of table, three minutes before the curtain rises on Act III.' Chair! Write it carefully! Good! Now take that chair to its place when not wanted. Then bring it back."

(This J. W. P. did.) "Take this pen and write again, I, John William Popple, promise to see that a chair is placed, centre down, o.p. side of table, three minutes before the curtain rises on Act III.'"

Again the chair was removed, again brought back by Popple, and again Popple wrote. Five times this ordeal was enacted before all the performers. It was a lesson to J. W. Popple and to the rest of the company as well.

Stupidity in an actor generally brought from Irving, at rehearsal, an Irvingesque cynicism that was more effective than the old-fashioned torrent of managerial abuse. But an actor who could not or would not rise to his part at the closing rehearsal was given a lesson by his chief.

One "sound actor," engaged by him for a period of five years, worried him at rehearsal so much that Irving was quite as severe upon him as he was on Popple, the master carpenter. "Show some spirit of the part, sir," cried Irving—"some intelligence! Eh! This is how it should be played, see," and Irving took the stage and went through the scene before all the company. The stolid actor stood by motionless.

"There, man," said Irving, panting for breath. "What do you think? Eh—can't you see, what do you say, eh?"

"Nothing," replied the actor, pulling the corner of his five years' agreement out of his pocket and pointing to it.

Another time Irving worked himself into a terrible fury over an actor's lack of inspiration. And after exhausting himself in his endeavours to show him how it should be played, said :

"Now, my dear sir, can't you see that is the way? Eh? Can't you speak? Eh! have you noticed nothing, sir—watching me, nothing, eh?"

"Yes, I have."

"Eh, you have?"

"Yes! That you want to use your handkerchief, sir," was the actor's reply.

When Phelps retired from Sadler's Wells Theatre, which he had pluckily managed, not to much advantage to himself, but at least for the benefit of the younger actors (though he lived for sixteen years afterwards and played in that time many parts), his Sadler's Wells speech was practically his farewell address before the curtain. After appearing in his favourite character of "Brutus," he addressed the audience in a long oration, winding up with the following words: "Before I conclude, allow me to observe how much I have been gratified in having been the means of bringing to this house a large body of young men—men, most of whom have received their first theatrical impressions in witnessing the plays of Shakespeare. The amusements of the people are a very important item in the composition of our social system. Dramatic representations have stood, and I believe in some form or other always will stand, in the foremost rank of those amusements; and it is surely better that the young—who are so easily and strongly impressed by them—should receive these impressions from the plays of Shakespeare rather than from sensational dramas, or translations from the French of questionable morality. And now, ladies and gentlemen, having long endeavoured to deserve your respect, I feel that I leave you accompanied by good wishes to some.



SAMUEL PHELPS'S FAREWELL.



future scene of action, and respectfully bid you farewell."

For a long time Macready dominated the stage. He was, no doubt, a great actor; his farewell indicated the dignity and impressiveness of which he was so truly capable. On February 26th, 1851, Macready writes in his diary :

"My first thought as I awoke was that this day was to be the close of my professional life." He relates his regret and his preparation for the coming event. "I said to myself, 'I shall never have to do this again.'" Then he makes entry, "Note from Dickens, enclosing one from Miss Coutts, wishing a box and five stalls."

Then came the evening: "With a nervous and fretful feeling acted as Macbeth as I never before acted it; with a reality, a vigour, a truth, a dignity that I never before threw into my delineation of this favourite character."

The inevitable farewell speech was delivered with extraordinary feeling. Macready rather prided himself upon his literary attainments and his eloquence. It was a rather longer speech than those delivered "in accordance with long-established usage." Like Garrick, he gave as his reason for retiring a wish to leave a good impression before his powers had left him. His concluding words were: "The repeated manifestation, under circumstances personally affecting me, of your favourable sentiments towards me, will live with life among my most grateful memories; and because I would not willingly abate one jot in your esteem, I retire with the belief of yet unfailing powers, rather than linger on the scene to set in contrast the feeble style

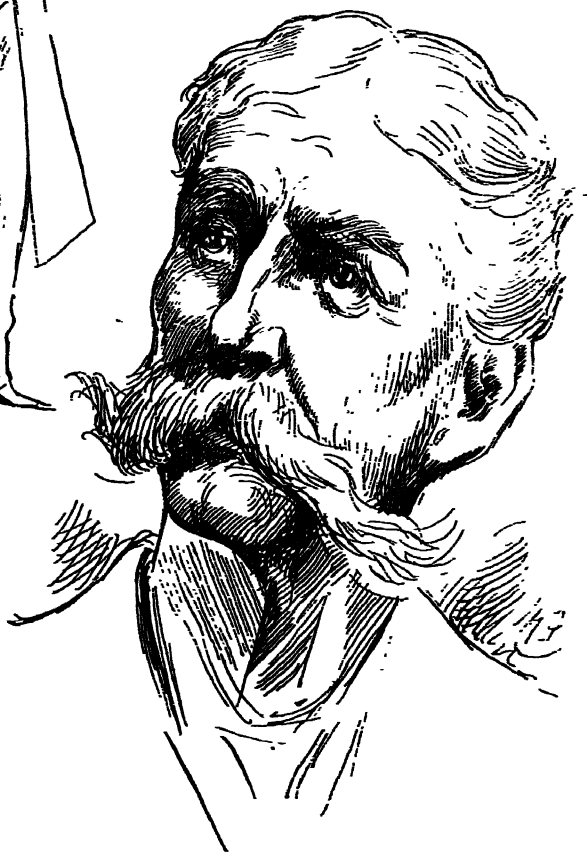
of age with the more vigorous exertions of my better years. Words—at least such as I can command—are ineffectual to convey my thanks ; you will believe that I feel far more than I give utterance to.

“ With sentiments of the deepest gratitude I take my leave, bidding you, ladies and gentlemen, in my past professional capacity, with regret, a last farewell.”

Macready was well pleased with his speech before the curtain, and relates how Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, Forster, Jerrold, Mark Lemon and other literary friends came into his room directly afterwards, “ all delighted with the evening, and pleased with the address, which they all applied for.” Macready left the best impression. Even Carlyle wrote of him :

“ Macready’s deserts to the English drama are notable here to all the world ; but his dignified, generous and everyway honourable deportment in private life is known fully, I believe, only to a few friends. I have often said, looking at him as a manager of great London theatres—this man presiding over the unstablest, most chaotic province of English things is the one public man amongst us who has dared to take his stand on what he understood to be *the truth*, and expect victory from that : he puts to shame our bishops and archbishops.”

Mr. Edward Askew Sothern, a most accomplished actor of the mid-Victorian era, took London by storm in 1862, in Tom Taylor’s comedy, “ Our American Cousin.” Lord Dundreary was a minor character in this very stupid play at the Haymarket Theatre. The performance fell so flat that the manager meditated taking the play off, but its fortune turned, as many fortunes do, on a very trivial accident. Sothern, who



**"DUNDREARY" SOTHERN**





played Lord Dundreary, a lisping, idiotic London swell of the period, tripped over a nail on making his entry, and stammered as he quickly changed his feet to retain his balance. That peculiar little movement, combined with the stutter, tickled the humour of the meagre audience, and a hearty laugh greeted Lord Dundreary's entrance. There is nothing more difficult than to make a small audience laugh, and this was a very small audience. Like the little pebbles thrown into a large pond, that laugh grew, until it spread round London. All London flocked to the Haymarket, and Sothorn's fortune was made. Sothorn, of course, was sharp enough to repeat the odd little impediment in his speech, and walk, and the character of Lord Dundreary became the *raison d'être* of the play. Lord Dundreary ranks with Jefferson's Rip Van Winkle as the greatest one-part success in the annals of the stage. Dundreary's son, E. T. Sothorn, in his entertaining *Reminiscences*, denies, however, the truth of this story. He attributes the peculiar little walk to his father's habit of continually changing step to keep in step with Mrs. Sothorn, who was a good deal shorter than himself.

In those days the upper-class "swell" was cultivating long hair (well lubricated with the hateful macassar oil), large moustaches and side-whiskers, which fashion originated with our officers who returned from the Crimea thus decorated, and protected against the bitter severity of the campaign. But it was left to Sothorn to give a name to the large, weeping whiskers—they were named the Dundreary whiskers. The faithfulness of Sothorn's representation of the swell of the period was upheld by the contemporary papers, and *Punch* in par-

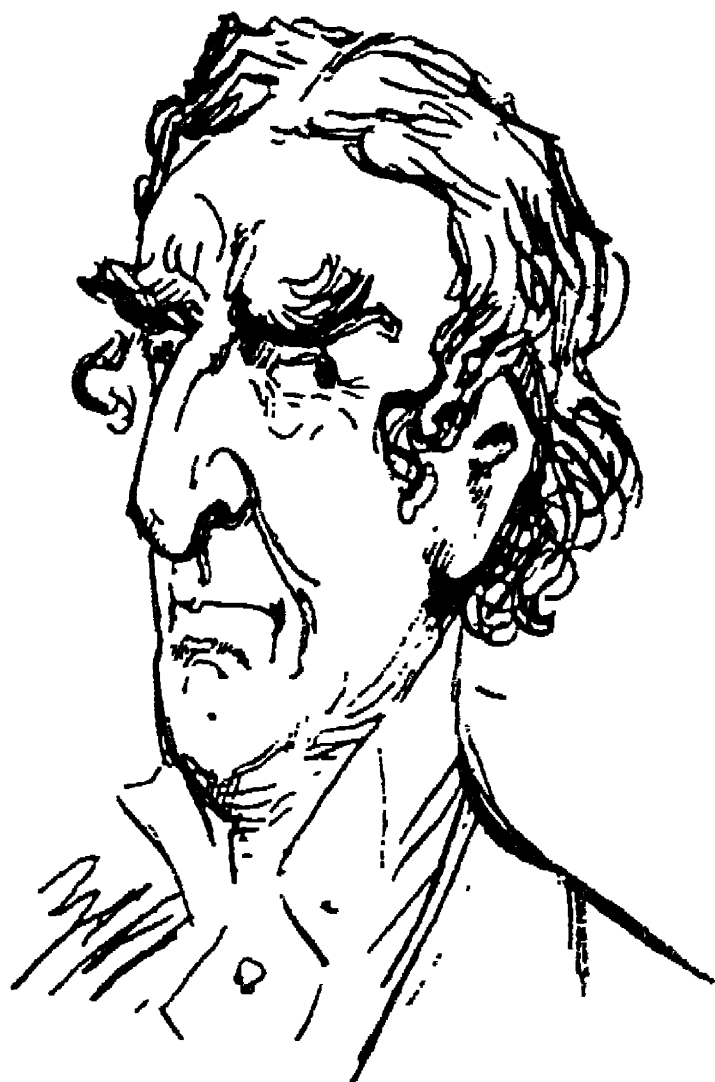
ticular. There is an admirable sketch (by John Leech) of two swells, both the image of Dundreary, whiskers and all, having the following conversation during the *entr'acte* :

FIRST SWELL : "A-a-wa ! Waw ! waw ! How did you like him ? "

SECOND SWELL : "Waw-waw-waw ! No fellow wvaw saw such a Fellow. Gwoss cawicature-waw ! "

Sothern, by the by, was no "one man" performer. As the Crushed Tragedian, as Dr. Pangloss, and above all in his performance of David Garrick, he was great. He was the first and the best David Garrick. Although Sir Charles Wyndham, in a later generation, regarded David Garrick as his own great part, those who remember the original, the refined, gentlemanly, finished performance of Sothern, cannot for a moment admit there was any room for comparison between the two. As different, shall we say, as a portrait painted by Sargent and one painted by Herkomer.

Who has not heard of the incident, at the Mess of the Horse Guards, at which Sothern was a guest ? To the chagrin of that gentlemanly actor, no sooner was Mess over than the General presiding rose and asked Sothern to entertain them. Sothern, who was not there professionally, but as an ordinary guest, was determined to teach the snobs a lesson. He said he would give the drunken scene from "David Garrick." The announcement was received with rapturous applause, increasing in volume as Sothern "rose to" the part. He clutched on the beautiful curtains, and, as he did on the stage, he tore them down ; he seized the choice glass on the table, the silver and gold ornaments, and smashed them to



JACK RYDER



atoms in the fervour of his acting ; and having literally wrecked the table, walked off, leaving the astonished guests to meditate over the lesson taught them by Sothern, the greatest practical joker of his time.

I did not meet Sothern until his return from America, in the early 'seventies, and I have referred to his practical jokes in various books of mine which have been published.

The splendid actor, John (Jack) Ryder, had a tremendous propensity for bad language, a fact which has often aroused comment. He was a great figure in Bohemia in the 'seventies and 'eighties. In the theatre he was an autocrat, and at rehearsal he was a terror, and he was, at all times, eccentric. The story is told of him that, when he was at the Old Queen's Theatre, Long Acre, rehearsing a drama in which peals of thunder were required, he called out to the stage assistants, "That won't do—try it again. No, no, nothing like it—louder ! Over again, you —— fools."

"Excuse me, Mr. Ryder, we haven't started yet. There's a real storm a-goin' on outside."

"That damn thunder is all very well, it may do for the powers above, but it's not good enough for Jack Ryder."

He was opening with a play at Liverpool one Monday night, and being informed that the costumes had not yet arrived from London, rushed into a telegraph office, seized a pencil and a telegram form and wrote :

"You d—— d—— fools, where the d—— are the costumes. You —— —— will ruin the show —— —— send next —— train. Ryder."

The girl clerk ran her eye over it and returned the form. "We cannot send such language as this, sir."

"Oh, give me the —— pencil," and he wrote another telegram.

"This will not do, sir; we cannot take any message couched in such language."

"Then write it yourself," bawled Ryder.

The girl wrote: "Costumes for to-night's performance have not yet come. Their non-arrival will ruin the performance. Please send them without fail by next train—wire reply immediately. John Ryder."

The telegram was sent. Ryder paced up and down the office until the reply came. It ran as follows:

"It won't do for us. That message is not from Jack Ryder."

Ryder was one day swearing as usual at the degeneracy of the stage. "I'm damned if I don't chuck the profession, and earn a living at something else. I started as a —— solicitor's clerk, and should have stuck to the —— law."

"Quite so," remarked a friend, "why not open an office now as Commissioner for Oaths?"

GENTLEMAN  
JOE  
THE KING OF  
CABMEN AT  
THE OXFORD.



THE KING OF CABMEN





## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MUSIC-HALL

**I**N one particular, among many, London has vastly improved since I first made its acquaintance. One has now to "look for trouble." In other words, one must go in search for the scum of humanity, which, in the old days, it was impossible to avoid. To go to theatre-land in the West End, it was then necessary to run the gauntlet of St. Giles's. Now we can stroll in comfort even to the Palace Theatre, that neighbourhood that once harboured the thieves' dens and many questionable characters of "Holy Land."

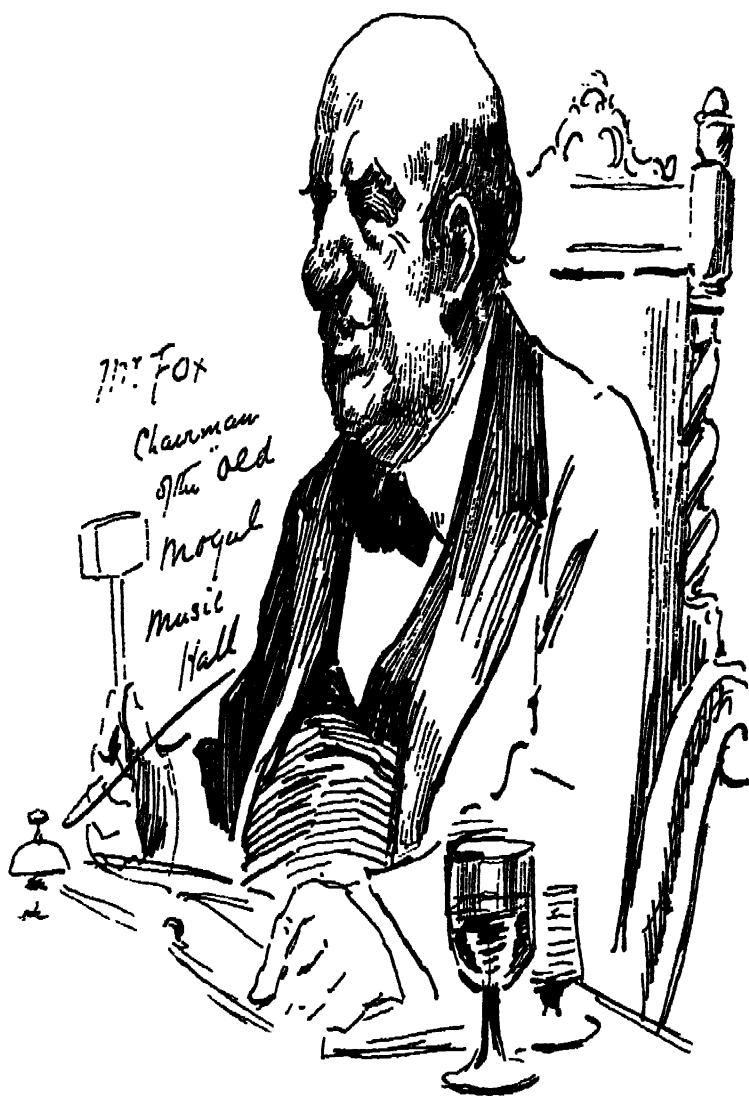
Few Londoners of the present generation have ever heard of Holy Land, London. Yet, in the early 'seventies, the name was as familiar as a household word, and I was not long in the "Little Village," in search of types and character, before I found my way to this Palestine of the Metropolis, where all the characters were about as bad as any in the world.

I had just left Dublin, where I lived for eight or nine years. Though only nineteen when I came to the land of my fathers, for seven years I had worked as a caricaturist (beginning at the tender age of twelve) and sought for material among the best, as well as the worst, quarters of dirty Dublin. Though I knew the Coomb, a disreputable slum, worse possibly than any in London,

New York, San Francisco or Sydney, the Holy Land was to me a revelation. Just as the vilest part of Paris was ironically christened the "Cour des Miracles," so was the name "Holy Land" given to St. Giles's, the paradise of the lowest ruffians, bullies and thieves. This site was eventually occupied by an opera house, built for English opera ; it then became a music-hall called the Palace, and is now a "picture" theatre.

When I was a youth the nearest approach to a music-hall was the Oxford—a very different place to what Cochran made it later. Then a "chairman" presided at a table, surrounded by his pals, drinking "for the good of the house." Tightrope performances and songs of great variety thrilled the patrons—the little shop-keepers, their wives, and the country folk.

Among them the "King of the Cabmen" was usually to be found, sipping his tall drink and waiting for his "swell" who was occupying a box. This cabman was one of London's characters. He only "worked" the West End, principally club-land, and was usually paid in gold. He was most certainly of an independent stamp, which fact he demonstrated in a practical manner, when an arbitrary measure was introduced by the police regulations, prohibiting cabmen from leaving their vehicles for refreshment. Then did the "King" pull up at a rank in Pall Mall, send for his lunch to a neighbouring restaurant, and receive it neatly laid upon a tray. Spreading a cloth over the top of his hansom, he opened a pint bottle of champagne and had his lunch before an admiring and enthusiastic street crowd ; which incident ended the "regulation," and it stopped operating from that time forth. The old-fashioned music-halls, together with the



FOX



"King of the Cabmen" and all his subjects, have long since ceased to exist.

The best "chairman" of the halls was one Fox, who presided at the old Middlesex, known as the "Mogul." His nose, set off by a big red face, witnessed a duty unflinchingly paid for "the good of the house." His friends were sprinkled in every part of England, and he drew them to the "Mogul" whenever they paid a visit to London.

Fox was very popular with the ladies of the halls, whom he frequently escorted for a stroll in the daytime to the delight of the youths of Drury Lane, and to see Fox presiding at his table, hammer in hand (and he was thus sculptured by a well-known artist) amid the lads of Drury Lane, was a sight not easily forgotten. The "Mogul" is to-day the Winter Garden Theatre.

The Pavilion in Piccadilly Circus was the home of the "Lion Comique," the great Vance of Champagne Charlie fame, the great MacDermott (the first music-hall singer, by the by, to receive a huge salary), the great Arthur Lloyd, the great Fred Albert, and all the rest of the other "greats," all of whom appeared in plain evening dress, or eccentric out-of-door costume, to sing their couple of songs. There was little vanity about it, even "in front of the house," for the man in evening dress was sufficient and sole attraction. Truly the British public in those days seemed to take its pleasures sadly.

Once or twice during the twelvemonth I would wander away from the beaten track to visit haunts in the East End of London. On these occasions I was accompanied by my male model, himself, in a minor

degree, a music-hall performer, acrobat and juggler ; he was also a veritable Mark Tapley. On one such excursion we found ourselves at a Whitechapel music-hall, where the stalls were priced sixpence, and the upper circles threepence halfpenny. The entertainment, I must admit, was worth all these vast sums combined, and one turn alone was worth a great deal more. He was a clog dancer, a sickly-looking youth—small, delicate, insignificant physique. His face was expressionless, he hadn't a word to say, but he danced divinely and "brought down the house." He was adorned with a wonderful belt, whether a genuine testimony to his dancing prowess or not I cannot say—and he also wore several medals which clicked like castanets. His name was Dan Leno.

Years afterwards, at Drury Lane Theatre, I had occasion to go behind the scenes. The bright particular star of the pantomime was Dan Leno, the clog expert I had last seen dancing in the East End (probably) for a few shillings a week. At Drury Lane he was receiving a princely income, and his tongue danced to a tune that made the audience rock with laughter. He was made up as a comic widow, and cut an irresistibly farcical figure.

While I stood in the wings sketching the scene, Dan, or rather the Widow Twankey, had a few minutes off the stage. The time that should have been spent resting was devoted to a highly exciting altercation, of which Dan Leno was the subject, between two very overdressed ladies, who had been permitted access to him. They were jointly, and severally, asserting their claims to the actor ; attacking each other, and also poor Dan, in their determination to establish their ascendancy.

Comic though the scene was—and I could not help

# POST CARD

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THE REVERSE

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THE REVERSE



DAN LENO'S CARD





being amused at the two over-dressed females, and between them the comedian in Widow Twankey's weeds, with pantomime cheek and red nose (a Widow Twankey as a Don Juan-cum-gay-Lothario!)—there was also the tragic side of the picture. For the unfortunate comedian's efforts were all concentrated in a frantic desire to prevent his wife, seated in a box close to the proscenium, from witnessing the incident. Surely it would be impossible to imagine a scene of more extraordinary incongruity.

When Dan was remonstrated with by his manager for his extravagant and Lothario-like tendencies, his reply was terse and characteristic. "Well," he said, "surely a man should be allowed *one* vice—I *don't* smoke!"

Some years ago, the *Star*, an evening paper, created a stir by inviting well-known people to occupy the editorial chair and run the paper for a brief period. Dan Leno was one of those selected for this eccentric experiment, and he sent out an appeal for contributions. Among others, he sent one to me. Here is the card he sent, and my reply faces it.

The late Albert Chevalier, who had originally been an actor in theatrical pieces, "knocked 'em" in the old Banqueting Room at St. James's Hall, one Sunday night, on which occasion he gave an entertainment entitled, "Popular Entertainers, Actors, and Music-Hall Singers," in which he proved himself as clever at preaching in his Sunday go-to-meeting best, as impersonating the lyrical coster in his "pearlies" on the boards of our variety theatres. Mr. Chevalier very truly remarked that "the best art was that which pleased not only the bilious few



but the healthy many." He might have added that the same applies to Art, where the "bilious few" really support nothing, they merely growl at everything, little realizing the fact that it is their own bodies, not other people's minds, that are unhealthy. By far the most interesting feature of Mr. Chevalier's "entertainment" was his opinion—based on his experience—that the managerial crushing of the actor's individuality had driven clever men to the "halls," where they had full play for their individuality and were not "blank canvases for someone else to paint on." Coster Chevalier was very fair towards the theatres, particularly when he said that the music-hall was an offshoot of the theatre, and that it "did not become a theatre to disown its branches."

The music-hall of London never took root in America. They call a performance at a theatre an opera, or burlesque—one which we would simply term a variety show or a music-hall entertainment. We have had, goodness knows, many samples of it in England. "A Trip to Chinatown" was the forerunner of these American plays, running at the Madison Square Theatre when I was first in New York. Similar ones abounded in every town I visited. They were simply mosaics made up of fragments of variety entertainments, and any excuse, such as a breakdown of a train, or the crowd on the steps of an hotel in summer-time, was sufficient excuse to bring together a conglomerate crowd of variety performers. The action of the play, if play it could be called, stopped every now and then to allow some character to perform a tune on his teeth, or a lady performer to execute a serpentine dance.



THE OLD ROYAL



It was my pleasure to number among my acquaintances the original author of this pioneer play, "A Trip to Chinatown." He was originally a journalist, and when a member of the fourth estate wrote this piece. He drifted into business, became a resident in England—and a millionaire. He told me that some years after he had written the "Trip" he was commissioned to write another play. He went to the nearest city in America in which they were playing his "great success." He only recognized one passage in it! Every other thing had been interposed, and the whole play was the conglomerate result of many years of gag. The sole passage resisting all changes was a purely American joke: "Will you have a stick (long drink) with me?" "Guess I'll take a broom handle." The old broom joke survived, but every word of the original had been swept away.

It was the coming of this class of variety entertainment that spoilt the legitimate burlesque, and completely destroyed the old-fashioned music-hall shows.

In my early days in London I devoted much attention to the pictorial study of Cockney character, and I often paid a visit to the music-halls. One evening, at a well-known West End variety theatre, just as I had ensconced myself in a snug corner and had taken out my sketch-book, I was addressed by a burly-looking man in a big overcoat, whom I previously noticed, paying, like myself, more attention to the audience than to the performers. Little did those present imagine that he was a detective. Indeed, with my pencil hard at work on my sketches, I might have appeared more open to the suspicion of a casual observer. As he seemed to be an intelligent man I encouraged him to talk. In the

course of the evening he informed me that the larger City houses were in the habit of engaging detectives to attend the various casinos, music-halls and similar places of public resort to watch the morals and manners of clerks and assistants. He said that his instructions were, if he noticed any young fellow spending his money too freely, to follow him home, and next morning shadow him to the City; so that, if he belonged to any of the firms who subscribed to the detective agency, a report might be furnished to his employers. Of course I cannot vouch for the truth of this. But my informant was most circumstantial in his explanation of the details of the organization employing him, and of the means by which it was supported.



## CHAPTER XIV

### SINGLE-HANDED ENTERTAINERS

**B**ESIDES the great professional public orators existing in the Victorian era, there were also the remarkable single-handed entertainers and reciters. It was an age of prudery, when a large proportion of the middle classes looked upon theatres as wicked, and music-halls not only as very wicked, but also (which, no doubt, they were) as foolish and low. It was then that the single-handed entertainers flourished. Nowadays, a large number of such patrons of the harmless entertainer are enthusiastic theatre-goers, and the former theatre-goers are the patrons of the cinema and music-halls. And the one-man show, so popular with our fathers, has gone. And, so far as I can predict, will never return to favour again.

Woodin was one of the first of a notable series of clever entertainers; George Grossmith brought the boom to an end.

Others exist now, quite as clever as their predecessors, but, as a rule, they do not give the whole evening's entertainment. They are merely introduced into a theatre in place of a curtain-raiser, or as a "turn" in a variety entertainment.

In my mind the single-handed entertainer, who can keep an audience amused for two hours, is a far cleverer

performer than any actor on the stage. In the first place he is, with few exceptions, the author of his own words. He has no limelight, or make-up, no cues, and no intervals or rests. His is not a relay race—he runs it all himself. In short, I do not know of one popular actor equal to such a task.

Perhaps no single-handed entertainer was ever more prolific, more popular, nor had such a world-wide reputation, as Henry Russell, the author of "Cheer, Boys! Cheer!" It seems only a few years ago, but it must be thirty or forty, that I made a sketch of an old man singing that song, accompanying himself on the piano, at the Savage Club. He was then close on eighty years of age. This was the veteran, Henry Russell. He died some years afterwards, nearly ninety years of age.

No man by his single entertainment equalled his power with the British public. He roused them to a sense of Imperialism. He did more by his music than a regiment of recruiting officers. He made thousands of British sailors by his one song, "A Life on the Ocean Wave." He composed altogether eight hundred songs, of which we need only name "The Ship on Fire," "There's a Good Time Coming, Boys," "To the West, to the West, to the Land of the Free," words written by Charles McKay, and put to music by Russell.

Recently I was having a conversation with a celebrated conductor, who informed me that song-writing nowadays was a most profitable occupation. Many thousands a year are earned by those lucky enough to write the rubbish sung by young ladies in modern burlesque. The sillier the song, the more inane its notion, the nearer it sails to the wind, the larger the profit. Music pub-



WOODIN



lishers give a retaining fee of £800 to £1000 a year to these composers of musical piffle, yet the great Russell, who was a national benefactor, received the magnificent sum of £3 for "Cheer, Boys! Cheer!"—10s. for "Ivy Green," and 8s. 2d. for "Woodman, Spare that Tree!" His eight hundred songs, sung by thousands during the sixty years of his life, averaged 10s. a song.

Is not this a sufficiently startling evidence of the change that has taken place in our times? Where could one find a more complete proof that, so far as our amusements are concerned, we have lost our taste for wholesome sentiment, and are willing to overpay the representatives of pure mediocrity? It is interesting to note that the great Henry Russell has left behind him a son who has enchanted us with his tales of the sea—Mr. Clark Russell, the favourite author of the schoolboy and also of many who have left school. And a stepbrother of his, Sir Landon Ronald, carries on the musical talents of his father's life-work, and keeps alive his father's reputation as a composer and conductor.

Albert Smith was for some time on *Punch* in its early days. He was a personal friend of John Leech, and so very unpopular that he eventually retired. Douglas Jerrold, the most caustic wit of the day, detested Smith. "Now we row in the same boat, Jerrold," remarked Smith. "Yes; but not with the same skulls," returned Jerrold, and again, when Jerrold first saw Smith's initials, A.S., he dryly remarked, "Two-thirds of the truth." Albert Smith was, I gathered from those who knew him, a pushing, rather vulgar man. He made a tremendous hit, however, as an entertainer, and drew all fashionable London to his entertainment at the

Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. The ascent of "Mont Blanc" was a novelty. One of his colleagues in that ascent was the Hon. Lionel Sackville West, afterwards our Ambassador at Washington. Albert Smith thus refers to his "Mont Blanc" show :

"For years, with my Alps in a box, I went round to various literary institutions. The inhabitants of Richmond, Brentford, Guildford, Staines, Southwark, Hammersmith, and other places, were respectively enlightened upon the theory of glaciers and the dangers of the Grand Plateau. I recall these first efforts of a showman—for such they really were—with great pleasure. I recollect how my brother and I used to drive our four-wheeled chaise across the country, with 'Mont Blanc' on the back seat."

Edmund Yates considered Albert Smith a genial, pleasant, honest fellow and his entertainment "excellent." He says of it :

"Then the whole tone of the performance was good, pleasantly and conversationally given as a kind of one-sided chat ; the painted views by William Beverly were admirable ; and lastly, the comfort of the audience had been thoroughly attended to. They sat in good chairs in a room well carpeted and curtained, charmingly decorated and properly ventilated ; and there were no 'harpies,' as Albert used to call them, catching at fees for cloaks, programmes, or what-not. The abolition of fees to attendants, now so general, was introduced by Albert Smith."

Certainly Albert Smith took the town by storm, and was one of the most successful Victorian single-handed entertainers.



HENRY RUSSELL





That happened before I was born, yet, when I appeared at Piccadilly in my "Humours of Parliament," Edmund Yates, who was present at the first performance, writing to congratulate me, mentioned Albert Smith's appearance, forty-five years before.

The Rev. J. M. C. Bellew, originally a clergyman in India, came to England, and was appointed minister in a church in Regent Street, now pulled down. Subsequently he became associated with Bloomsbury Chapel, where he attracted great numbers of people, not for the administering of any religious benefits, but because of his grand elocutionary gifts. Later he left the Church of England and joined the Roman Catholic Church. Eventually he became an entertainer.

Bellew had a fine head, quick, penetrating eyes, eloquent mouth, and was such a magnificent elocutionist that it may have surprised many he did not join the theatrical profession. An actor he always was, whether in the pulpit or out of it.

But his figure was not like his face. His body was out of proportion. He was all right to the waist, but he had shockingly short and bandy legs. He was not, indeed, unlike Lord Leighton without his beard. It is a thousand pities men with fine heads and chests, and gifted with great eloquence, should frequently be so much out of proportion as to be rendered almost deformed. The head of Bellew or Leighton on the neck of a Thackeray would have made all the difference to the eloquent preacher and the artist.

One of my earliest recollections—I was quite a boy—was that of hearing Bellew give a reading entertainment. I say advisedly that I heard him, for I did not see him.

Placed as I was in the hall, and seated very low (myself being very small), I saw nothing but a pair of bandy legs behind a table, on which stood a reading-desk that completely hid his fine head from my view.

My artistic eye at once detected how dreadful these legs would look in tights. And I then and there came to the conclusion that Bellew might have been an actor had it only been possible to hide his legs by always standing behind a table. In this respect he was even better off in the pulpit than on the platform. And what a treat his readings were! In my opinion the best elocutionist of his, or of any time. He made, however, one mistake, judged by my juvenile mind. In his lengthy programme he included Gilbert's Bab Ballads (then quite new), and, instead of reciting, he sang them!

The home circle of my boyhood may certainly have been termed both quiet and uneventful, but we had plenty of time in which to think and read. And the youth of to-day has neither. He is too busy with his motor-bicycle, his telephone, his broadcasting, his picture palace and sports and other recreations. His home is a rendezvous where he occasionally meets his parents—his father who has returned from his golf or his club, his mother who has returned likewise from her matinée or her club.

When a little boy (else my environment was not typical of the early Victorian traditions) I must have been a prig, for I recall that I fancied myself as a reader. While my mother and sister were occupied with their needlework, and my father indulged in his post-prandial snooze, I, perched on a cushion mounted on



ALBERT SMITH



a chair, read either Anthony Trollope, Dickens, or, as a particular personal treat, Harrison Ainsworth or Wilkie Collins. Had this self-appointed Bellew of the family but a scanty audience, it mattered not. He still read, and kept on reading, as everyone did in those days, for the very practical reason that there was no other method of passing one's spare time.

*Tempora mutantur.* To-day "Picture papers are good enough for me" is the generally expressed opinion of my juvenile friends. "I don't read newspapers," continues the twentieth-century youth, "I look at them, but as for books! Fiction is part of the curriculum at school, and the school library is quite enough to last one for a long time, or at any rate until one becomes too old for sport, or can't afford to go in for a motor!"

We not only read ourselves, but in those days we went to hear famous professional readers.

George Grossmith, Secundus, was the link between the old single-handed entertainers and the new, as shown by the following incident. Very early in his career he was appearing at a London hall in his capacity of musical entertainer. Addressing the audience, he said, "I shall now have the honour of introducing to your notice a little sketch after the manner of the late John Parry." The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a gentleman in the body of the hall rose with the emphatic remark, "No, I'm damned if you will." It was Parry himself, who not unnaturally objected to being classed among those who had gone over to the great majority.

To be funny without being vulgar is the most difficult part of the task of the entertainer. Even Corney Grain

occasionally—when offended—forgot himself, and was more forcible than refined.

I recollect meeting Corney Grain on one occasion, just after my return from Banbury (where the cakes come from) and where I had been giving my “Humours of Parliament,” and I told him that he had left behind an impression not quite as sweet as the cakes, for which the place is celebrated. To which he rejoined :

“Oh, I remember that infernal place, old chap! You would have let out, too, had you had my experience.

“I was invited to be the guest of some well-known family during my stay, and when I arrived from London I found prepared my pet abomination, a high tea. As soon as I had swallowed the indigestible compound, fatal to one’s voice, I was rushed off to the hall, and in front of me sat my high-tea hosts. I therefore started my entertainment with my song on the horrors of a high tea, and I suppose rendered these good people enemies for life. To make matters worse, later in the evening, and in the middle of one of my songs, a huge bell attached to the building rang out with full force, denoting, I subsequently discovered, that some house in the country was on fire. All my audience rushed out to see if it was theirs. I only wished that it might be the fire of my high-tea friends, but it was not. They had received too great a chill from my first song!”

For the funny man to be refined, and for the serious man not to be dull, these are but a few of the things required of the single-handed entertainer.

I have so frequently referred to George Grossmith, and related so many of his practical jokes, that I have left nothing to introduce into this chapter. Yet of all the

single-handed entertainers of my days he was decidedly the most successful, and the most popular. There is one story about him I have never made public, although I feel sure he intended it to be a joke, for we were always on the most friendly terms. It did not come off, however, quite as he expected. I recollect, in his latter days, he was sitting next to me in the smoking-room before dinner, when Lord C., a new member, entered in evening dress. Grossmith held up his finger and cried out, "Waiter, bring me a sherry and bitters, please." The new member rang the bell, a waiter appeared, and all that he said was, "I believe Mr. George Grossmith wants you." Turning to me, Grossmith whispered, "Harry, these old jokes won't do nowadays; the new set have no sense of humour." Grossmith's great failing was an occasional want of tact. Now for the joke with me which failed. I may say that the worst possible audience for an entertainer are those who are themselves public performers. They seldom can resist the temptation to be *en évidence*.

I recollect one sunny afternoon in a hall on the South Coast—either Folkestone or Margate, I forget which—I had a very small audience, but an appreciative one, to hear my "Humours of Parliament." In the second or third row of the stalls, at an end seat under the gallery, sat a man in a sou'-wester coat, and a soft hat pulled over his eyes. He laughed loudly, applauded ferociously, and then hurled complimentary remarks at me, these by degrees becoming more and more satirical. "No, no, Harry, that won't do." "Hullo! that's so poor a joke you might send it to *Punch*," and so on. There was no mistaking the laugh, and the voice, but I pretended not

to hear either and went on as if the "stranger" was not present. When I came to the end of the first part, I stepped forward and said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, my dear friend and partner in this show, Mr. George Grossmith, has been doing his bit, seated among you in front. His piano has now arrived, so that he may continue his entertainment in the second part of the programme—on the stage."

At this the audience applauded vigorously, but before I had left the stage Grossmith had vanished.

In a memoir of George Grossmith I came across the following anecdote. It is labelled authentic as one related by George Grossmith himself. Sir Henry Irving and he were once staying at the same hotel in Manchester. A large crowd had gathered outside the entrance, and Mr. Grossmith, in a jocular way, asked the porter if they were waiting to see him leave the hotel. "No, sir," was the reply, "they are waiting to see Sir 'Enery Hirving." "But doesn't Sir Henry find this a bit of a nuisance?" The porter said it did worry Sir Henry a bit. Mr. Grossmith, who told the tale, added, "I said, 'Well, I'll do him a good turn.' I put my fur-lined coat on, I pulled up my collar a bit, adjusted my pince-nez, pulled my Homburg hat over my brow, and strutted down the steps with the Irving gait. The cheering was great, and some of the people even followed the carriage. When Sir Henry came down a little later he found no crowd awaiting him. I did not tell him of this adventure, but he heard of it, and spoke about it afterwards. With a humorous twinkle in his eye he said, 'You ought not to have done that. I pay these people to come every night.'" So well had he mimicked the great actor.





GEORGE GROSSMITH



It is quite possible this might have happened, as Grossmith was a wonderful actor and dearly loved practical jokes, but I think it is most improbable. I have often stayed at the same hotel as Irving, in the provinces, and I have never noticed any "large crowd," or any small one, or any persons whatever waiting to see him leave his hotel. Certainly, when Tree and other stars, perhaps Irving included, arrived at Dublin or New York, crowds, consisting largely of the supers from the theatre, paid for the job, cheered to order, and around most stage doors persons collect to see their favourites leave. But I have never seen anything of the kind at hotels, except sometimes when theatrical stars arrive home on the last night of their performance.

Besides, I should like to ask, where did Grossmith get his hat? Irving always wore a square-shaped bowler (if one may be pardoned the Irishism), a rather shabby, curious hat, of which I doubt if he had two on tour. His paid audience would hardly recognize him if wearing any other headgear.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE VICTORIAN PLATFORM

AMONG all the varied callings and professions that rose to supply a very decided need—we must number the entertainers, readers and public lecturers of the Victorian era. As that brilliant period waned, so did they automatically cease to exist. And it is strange and somewhat sad to reflect that now there should be no such demand, the supply must fade through sheer inanition. It is not to be believed that men and women of such a fine educational calibre, wielding a very sensible and wholesome influence over a large section of the British public, should have failed to pass on their knowledge. But the fact remains that these special qualities are no longer requisitioned by the British public.

So completely have things changed that it is hard for those who, like myself, helped in that particular sphere to realize that such things ever did exist. And yet it is perfectly true that every town had its flourishing Literary and Scientific or Philosophical Society, which society engaged lecturers and entertainers and ran courses that we may now wonder at, including, as they did, not only men who were known in England, but names of world-wide reputation.

The courses were extremely varied to suit all tastes. And each week the subscribers of the societies had the

exceptional benefit of both seeing and hearing those who were celebrated in their particular professions.

But now, alas, cinematograph shows have taken the place of intellectual evenings, and Charlie Chaplin shakes his bells (I was about to say feet and hat, for, I am told, having never seen him, these are his chief assets) to attract the public.

The artist has been superseded by the photographer, the entertainer and lecturer have been killed by the cinema; the illustrator might also be included in this slaughter, but he still flickers a faint existence.

The platform was both profitable and popular for many years. It flourished at a time when a goodly portion of the middle classes, particularly those of the large manufacturing cities, cherished an idea that play-going was wicked but entertainments in public halls were harmless. The latter most certainly were instructive and elevated the minds of the people in an agreeable and social fashion, and occasionally, as I have learnt from my own experience, have helped some to the professions for which they were most fitted.

When I first began my travels in lecture-land the names of those "on the road" were ones with which to conjure. Let me recall a few of the most brilliant: Sir Robert Ball, Augustine Birrell, Andrew Lang, Professor Darwin, Professor Rucker, Justin McCarthy, Canon Ainger, Dr. Dallinger, Oscar Wilde, Clifford Harrison, Herman Merivale, Max O'Rell, the Rev. H. R. Haweis, Samuel Brandram, Professor Blackie, Mrs. Henry Fawcett, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., Professor Ayrton and Edmund Gosse. Surely it was a goodly company, and no wonder the



literary and scientific societies under such auspices flourished. To recount some of the qualities essential to the success of a public entertainer might not come amiss.

To be a lecturer, entertainer or reader entails four things. A good voice, a good memory, a strong constitution, and, most important of all, a real pleasure in giving "the show." It was not so much what one said—but how one said it. Max O'Rell's matter was very clap-trap, indifferent stuff, but his manner was superb. He was a born actor, with a most engaging manner, artistically a genius in his delivery of *bons mots*, and the lucky possessor of a fascinating broken accent that gave a unique flavour to his entertainment. He had a good presence, and, off the platform, made many friends.

There is the point which the public is apt to overlook—that the lecturer, to ensure a success, must be interesting and genial on and off the platform. Travelling continually, lecturing nightly, entertaining and being entertained, entails such hard work—that the last (and perhaps the most trying of all) is beyond the strength of most men. The double task of entertaining and being entertained is the extra load that breaks the heart of the traveller in lecture-land. Those who start late in life, as did Charles Dickens, find in time the double task a fatal load. The successful lecturer, like the late Sir Robert Ball, was always a lecturer. But it is the man who tries to do both, who carries on two kinds of work, who fails.

Wilkie Collins wrote to Sir John Hare to say that, although he could make seventy to eighty pounds a night lecturing in America, the strain of travelling was

when Mr. Furniss kicked that tack or nail away, and he found another last night. And, in spite of all I said, to-night he again kicked something else—proving that the platform was not properly swept.”

I was glad I heard this, or the excellent keeper of the hall might have been treated as I treated the imaginary nail.

Lecture agents would, in time, have killed lecturing if the cinema had not already ensured its decease. It mattered not to the lecture agents whether their clients were good or bad. Fresh names they needed to fill their supply list for the season. The names they enrolled might be the biggest stars in literature, the most famous artists, and the most interesting travellers of the day, but as lecturers and public entertainers they were, more often than not, miserable failures. If the lecturer's manner was bad, his voice weak, devoid of that electricity which was, is and always must be the necessary equipment of a public speaker, then failure followed.

The great writer, Thackeray, when public lecturing, could not command success. Good as his matter was, tremendous as was the excitement to see him, he failed miserably as a lecturer. So did Arnold and many other brilliant men. And that, too, at a time when the public was ripe for that particular class of entertainment. Nowadays, lesser lights in literature, and others with still less claims as celebrities, have even a more thankless task.

It is not the cleverest thinkers and writers who are the best lecturers and entertainers. They will often “lecture” and fail. They have succeeded in shutting up one society after another, and put an end to a course





SIR ROBERT BALL.



of lectures. One bad lecturer will ruin a whole course. The greater the name of the new lecturer, the larger the audience, and the more disastrous is the result.

I knew one writer who, though a funny man, popular, of world-wide reputation, and a thorough master of his subject, had no manner—but a rude one—and no voice. He was “run” by his agent for every course of lectures in the country. His idea of entertaining his audience was to run on to the platform, hide his funny little figure behind the reading-desk, read every word from manuscript, in a feeble, monotonous, effeminate little voice that did not carry twenty yards, and, after one hour by the clock, shut up his notes and run off again. He was neither seen nor heard, and the disappointed audience would walk home vowing vengeance on the committee for luring them to the hall under false pretences. This one fiasco has been the cause—so I was told by those who suffered—of shutting up not one, but several societies organized for popular lectures.

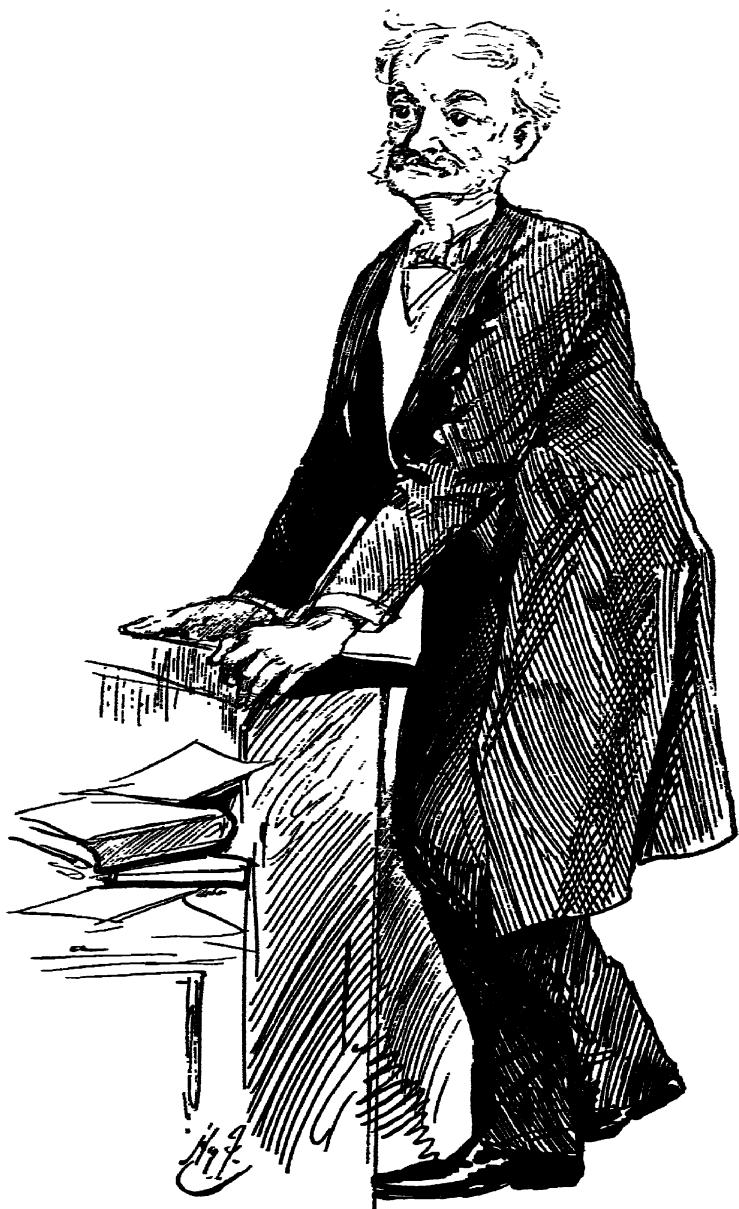
The Victorians were, when all has been said, great men on the platform, and, as a rule, were better speakers than those in Parliament, or in other similar assemblies.

Of all the popular platform speakers, Sir Robert Ball was the most popular. He mixed up instruction with humour in a marvellously effective way. His rich Irish brogue and guilefully humorous acting made him a welcome performer wherever he went, and he went everywhere. The fact that the lens is more searching than the human eye was cleverly and humorously demonstrated in a characteristic fashion by Sir Robert Ball. That brilliant Professor was announced to lecture on “Invisible Stars,” and, when he appeared on the platform, he informed

his audience that he had received a letter asking him how could he possibly lecture on such a subject—the stars being invisible? He referred his listeners to a curious fact in connection with the *Great Eastern* steamship, known by our fathers and grandfathers as Brunel's White Elephant. That tremendous ship, launched fifty years ago, was looked upon as the tenth wonder of the world, but it was a commercial failure, and eventually fell into the hands of the showman, used as a colossal battery machine, and eventually as an advertisement for one Lewis, a Liverpool tradesman. After which it was towed over to Ireland and the name of Lewis painted out, the ship thoroughly overhauled and repainted. A photographer was amazed and bewildered to find that, when he developed his photographs of the ship, the letters LEWIS were plainly visible on the ship's side, though no eye could see them!

Apropos of this subject, the witty Irishman related another story. A young lady sat for her photograph; she was a pretty girl, and in due course the proofs were sent home. Imagine the dismay of her fond parents when they discovered that the face was spotted all over. Neither the photographer nor the parents could account for the blemish. The photographer held that the blemish was not due to his work, and an angry scene took place, warm correspondence followed, and just as things were coming to a crisis the mystery was solved. The girl developed measles, which complaint, of course, the lens had detected.

The analogy between the mystery letters on the hull of the great ship, the measles spots on the cheek of the pretty girl, and the invisible stars will be obvious to my reader.



ANDREW LANG



Now where did all these lecturers come from, and whither did they go? I'll answer for one. Lecturing on one occasion at a big town hall in the Midlands, I was informed that the lecturer who had been commissioned to entertain a huge audience the previous week was a new man, a clever novelist, whose name was a great attraction. Well, his name was the sole entertainment. It was true that the lecturer appeared, but he opened his mouth as if to speak, he opened his eyes and gazed around the huge, packed town hall, and his open ears heard the encouraging applause. Without uttering one syllable, he bolted. Nowhere could he be found, so the audience departed. As the hall-keeper was locking up the building, he heard a noise in the housekeeper's pantry. The door was fastened from the inside, and through the keyhole came a faint voice, "Have they all gone? Yes? Then I'll come out."

There is one fact about English people that is undeniable, and that is their utter ignorance in art matters. We are not an artistic nation. It is true that big prices are given for big pictures at Christie's, but these transactions are purely commercial gambles, into which the love of art seldom, if ever, penetrates. That we claim to be artistic must lie at the door of the art critic. The truth would end his occupation. So we have art criticisms as we have articles on other fallacious and historical subjects.

The art critic has a mission, and his mission is to educate the people, so it is not surprising to find the art critic among the ranks of the lecturers. A good lecture on art can be just as entertaining as a good lecture on turnips. On the other hand, it may be neither.

I knew of one lecturer, with a painful stutter, who actually essayed to lecture seriously on art. He began lecturing in a Midland town. The audience was a well-trained lecture audience, and sat patiently through a long and painful exhibition. At last a man in the gallery called out, "Speak oop, laad!" The lecturer made a great effort, and for a time was quite audible, until the same man in the gallery, with a pathetic yet determined accent, called out, "Shoot oop, laad!"

It was the critic's first and last appearance as a lecturer.

Andrew Lang was one of our great, brainy, literary Scotchmen. His matter was always of a high order, but his manner was peculiar, and his voice of a weird falsetto character. His effeminate manner and his hen-like speech attracted his audience far more than his literary merit. Said he, on one occasion, "I have to lecture to you for one hour on B-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-k-s!!" Laughter.

Later on, looking at his watch, he whined:

"I have now three-quarters of an hour to lecture to you on B-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-k-s!!!" Laughter, and a portion of the audience leave the hall.

Later on he again looks at his watch.

"I have now half an hour to lecture to you on B-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-k-s!!!!"

More laughter and more leave.

When he looked at his watch and informed them that only a quarter of an hour remained for his talk on B-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-k-s! the remainder did not finish their laughing before he finished what was no doubt a most learned and excellent address.



## CHAPTER XVI

### CHARLES DICKENS—AS AN ACTOR

OF all the Victorians mentioned in this book, Charles Dickens is the one I should have most enjoyed meeting. It so happened that I saw him only once, though I have written more about him than any other Victorian, as I am the only artist who has illustrated an entire series of Dickens's completed works, which task necessitated an intimate knowledge of the great author. Also it has been my good fortune to meet many interesting men and women who were his friends and contemporaries, leading to an irresistible conviction that I, too, had shared his acquaintance.

I was sixteen when he died, and saw him but once, that is if I, a very small boy in a very high and crowded gallery, can claim to have seen him. For my recollection is distinctly the reverse. I did not even hear him—and it was the occasion of one of his readings. It must have been a very dim and obscure corner of the hall in Dublin where the small boy pushed and peered in vain for a glimpse of the great "Boz."

Therefore I must be pardoned if I quote the opinions of others on the subject of the great novelist, and brave the criticism made by the old lady when she first witnessed a performance of "Hamlet," that she was disappointed as it was too full of quotations.

After reading the various descriptions of Charles

Dickens's personal appearance, the pen portraits of the majority of great writers of his day, one conjures up a face full of mobile, intellectual vitality, which no painter seemed capable of placing on canvas. The beauty of his eyes—true index of the brain—baffled description. He had a fine forehead, a good nose, nostrils wide and full, a mouth large and eloquent, a strong jaw and a determined chin. A mirthful, fascinating expression, at times positively handsome and always profoundly interesting.

"Boz" was almost as great a treat to hear as to read. He was undoubtedly the best after-dinner speaker of his day, and an actor to the manner born.

Carlyle, like thousands of other matured critical minds, hearing Dickens read, remarked that he acted better than the best actor on the stage. He was more than a star actor, he was a whole company of stars. "A whole tragic, comic, heroic theatre visible, performing under one hat."

Charles Dickens had, in fact, the face of an actor, and but for a mere chance would have adopted the stage as a profession. He wrote to Forster: "I do not know if I ever told you seriously, but I have often thought it, that I should have been successful on the boards as I have been between them. When I was twenty years old, and when I had been for three or four years to Mathews's 'At Homes,' I wrote to Bartley, who was then stage manager at Covent Garden, and told him how young I was and exactly what I thought I could do. He wrote me, with an appointment, telling me that I might do anything of Mathews's that I pleased before himself and Charles Kemble, on a certain day at the theatre. I was



CHARLES DICKENS



laid up when the day arrived with a terrible bad cold. I wrote to say so, and added that I should resume my application the next season. I made a great splash in the Gallery soon afterwards: the *Chronicle* opened to me; and I never resumed the idea. See how near I have been to another sort of life."

The world has to be thankful for that cold! He was then a reporter on the staff of the *Chronicle*, and "the splash in the Gallery" was Dickens's manner of describing Parliament—a place for which he had no sympathy and had always utterly detested. This splash was merely a heralding of the much greater splash as—to use his own description of himself—"a writer of books," the writing of which led to yet another "splash," that of reading his books, or, more correctly speaking, acting his books.

That charming man of letters and respected leader of the Irish party in Parliament, the late Justin McCarthy, wrote: "I was ever unfailing in my attendance at Dickens's readings in London, and became filled with the conviction which impressed itself on most of those who heard them, that if Dickens had chosen to make the stage his career he would have ranked amongst the greatest English actors. The world has good reason to rejoice that he kept to his own work and has left us in his books a living reality, whereas even had he been the greatest of actors, he could have bequeathed to us nothing but a tradition."

But let me quote one of our most successful actors' impressions of Dickens, as an actor. I was present at one of our Boz Club dinners in 1907, when my old friend Sir John Hare made a very finished and delightful speech on the subject, in the course of which he said: "I should

like to say, speaking as an actor, and I am sure that it is as an actor that you wish me to speak, that while the world at large has gained by Charles Dickens's devotion to literature, the stage lost one who, if he had chosen to adopt it as his calling, would probably have been the greatest actor of his time. None who had the good fortune to see the plays in which he acted can forget his mastery of stage technique. None who can remember his readings can forget his vivid and life-like powers of characterization. Comedy and tragedy, humour and pathos, each came readily within his means. By his mastery of the actor's art, terror, tears and laughter were compelled at his command, as by his pen he compelled them in his writings. Who can forget the readings of *Oliver Twist*? The memory of it will linger with me all my life. I can recall the scene. The cold, bare platform, the small, plain reading-desk with its shaded light, the simple, dignified figure, and the noble face, and then the quiet opening of his subject with that wonderful and telling voice. This for a brief space, then what a transformation! The bare platform, the desk, Dickens himself, all gone, and in their place the stage alive with the creations of his genius. No scene painter painted for him, no actors acted for him, yet we, the audience, saw the steps of London Bridge, saw the spy Claypole sneak behind the buttress; saw Nancy, unsuspecting, making those confidences to Mr. Brownlow and Rose Maylie which eventually led to her betrayal and her death. The scene changes. In the squalid garret Fagin has incited Sikes to murder. We hear the thundering crash as the victim is stricken to the ground, and as Sikes tears the blood-stained tresses from his bludgeon,

and throws them in the flames, we hear the singeing whish as they flutter up the chimney, destroying, as he thinks, the evidence of his crime. Not until the advent of Henry Irving in 'The Bells' have I seen an audience so moved, so spellbound, so enthralled. And as it is certain that the stage lost a great actor, it is almost equally certain that it lost a great dramatist, for the hand that penned *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Our Mutual Friend*, *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*, could, had the mind that directed it so willed, have produced dramas of equal power and beauty. But it is not for us to repine for what is lost, but rather to rejoice at our great gain. In every public library, on the bookshelf of every modest home, are to be found the 'Works of Charles Dickens.' To those works we turn again and again for inspiration, for companionship, and for example, and as we restore the well-thumbed volume to its place, it is with emotion that we recall 'the touch of the vanished hand,' and seem once again to hear 'the sound of a voice that is still.' "

I do not altogether agree with Sir John Hare in his reference to Dickens as a dramatist. Of all Dickens's works, the only one which really lends itself to a thoroughly successful dramatization is *The Tale of Two Cities*, with its one great striking action character—Carton. Dickens wrote to Miss Boyle: "I must say that I like my Carton, and I have a faint idea that if I acted him I could do something with his life and death."

There is no doubt that, had Dickens been an actor, he would have excelled in such parts as Sydney Carton. But then we should have had no Pickwick, no Micawber, no Tom Pinch and a hundred other delightful creations,

including Sydney Carton himself. It was not so much in the rôle of a comedian but in that of a tragedian—both on the platform and on the stage—lay Dickens's great success. When in his own little theatre at Tavistock House he produced Wilkie Collins's drama, *The Frozen Deep*, he played the part of Richard Wardour, the rejected lover, a moody man, of a rugged but noble nature—in fact an uncultured Carton—but a Carton with passion, according to the critics of that day. The piece was performed in public in Manchester and other places for a charity. Dickens scored a tremendous success. The *Leader* of January 20th, 1857, refers to his acting as follows :

“Mr. Dickens's performance of this most touching and beautiful part might open a new era for the stage, if the stage had the wisdom to profit by it. It is fearfully fine throughout—from the sullen despair in the Second Act, alternating with gusts of passion or with gleams of tenderness (let us more particularly note the savage energy with which he hews to pieces his rival's berth with an axe, when the approaching departure of Frank Aldersley renders it no longer needed, except for fuel), down to the appalling misery and supreme emotion of the dying scene. Most awful are those wild looks and gestures of the starved, crazed man ; that husky voice, now fiercely vehement, and now faltering into the last sorrow ; that frantic cry when he recognizes Clara ; that hysterical burst of joy when he brings in his former object of hatred, to prove that he is not a murderer ; and that melting tenderness with which he kisses his old friend and his early love, and passes quietly away from life. In these passages, Mr. Dickens shows that he is not





CHARLES DICKENS AT REHEARSAL



only a great novelist, but a great actor also. Both, indeed, proceed from the same intense sympathy with humanity, the same subtle identification of the individual man with the breadth and depth of our general nature. Mr. Dickens has all the technical knowledge and resources of a professed actor ; but these, the dry bones of acting, are kindled by that soul of vitality which can only be put into them by the man of genius, and the interpreter of the affections."

Francesco Berger, with whom I have had many a chat about Dickens, wrote the overture, and arranged the incidental music. He relates, in his interesting *Reminiscences*, how hard they worked for three months rehearsing the play called *The Frozen Deep*. "Manager" Dickens was thorough in everything he undertook and terribly in earnest. His whole soul was in it, whatever it might be. "No detail was forgotten, no personal discomfort was allowed to weigh, whether getting up a 'benefit' for a friend, or acting, or dancing, or brewing punch, it was always the same." Carlyle—a rather "difficult person"—writes of him as the "gentle, high-gifted, ever friendly, noble Dickens—every inch an Honest Man." Berger declares that Dickens for several weeks omitted one particular scene from the play at rehearsal which had been "written in." When it was at last introduced by Dickens it was discovered that he had the whole scene to himself, and adds: "It was a most wonderful piece of acting. Anything more powerful, more pathetic, more enthralling, I have never seen."

Charles Dickens's love for the stage made him take everything connected with it in a serious strain. Even

as a boy he revelled in play-acting, and that ardent Dickensian, Percy Fitzgerald, related one evening an amusing incident, apropos of this trait in Dickens's character. I give it in his own words :

"I do not know whether you have ever heard of an old melodrama entitled 'The Miller and his Men.' It is a curious, old-fashioned thing. The plot turns on a set of men who were robbers and occupied a mill, pretending to be carrying on the work of milling. The drama opened with a long procession of men carrying sacks on their backs.

"Well, one day I was walking along carrying a parcel when I met Charles Dickens, who was advancing in his own cheery, brisk fashion. Looking at my parcel he said to me, 'What! More sacks to the mill!' I knew exactly what he meant and answered, 'Oh yes, and you know when the wind blows, then the mill goes.' 'Oh, Lord bless me!' he said—a favourite ejaculation of his—'Do you know "The Miller and his Men"?' I told him that when I was a boy we got up the piece at school, with splendid decorations and scenery, and everything else, and it was most successful. 'Lord bless us!' he said again, 'that is most extraordinary. Why I got it up when I was at school.' I saw clearly what was in his mind. One of his favourite theories was ever the mysterious connection that existed between people separated by birth or distance and other things; and he always maintained that they were curiously connected together in some way. He said, 'You see, you and I got up "The Miller and his Men" together at a time when there was not the slightest connection between us.'

"I thought no more of the matter, but occasionally he made an allusion to 'more sacks to the mill.'

"One day I got a letter from him, in which he said, 'What do you think! The manager of Drury Lane is actually getting up "The Miller and his Men." We must go and see it; we will dine together at the Albion and have a pleasant night.' I was quite delighted at the idea. We went to the Albion, an old tavern behind 'Old Drury,' long since swept away.

"I found a group of men about him and listened devoutly. These were persons connected with the Press—reporters and others. Nothing could exceed the cordiality of his reception of them, and his enjoyment of their company. He showed that he had been one of them. That scene of the great writer, surrounded by his humble friends, might have done for a painter.

"Well, we went to our box at 'the Lane,' and the old play began. 'Now for it,' he said. 'More sacks to the mill.' We heard the mystic words. But what was this? Was it a comic piece or burlesque? For everyone was striding, shouting and turning it into fun. We then learned that this was one of Hollingshead's 'palmy day pieces,' put on to throw ridicule on them—itself a ridiculous proceeding. Dickens became silent—he was a little shocked at seeing his old idol shattered. Presently he said, 'Let us go,' and we went away. We came to the office, where we found a dainty little supper set forth. I remember the menu to this hour—a lobster, a *pâté de foie gras*, and a bottle of champagne. I remember the whole scene as though it were yesterday, though it is nigh fifty years ago. These things came from Fortnum

and Mason's, and to that house he gave his praise :  
 ' Everything you get there will be good.' "

Dickens suffered acutely when his books were adopted for the stage.

He wrote to Robert Keeley, a very popular actor of his time, about to produce an adaptation of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, that he felt "secure" about Ruth Pinch and "certain" of Mrs. Gamp ; "but a queer sensation begins in my legs, and comes upwards to my forehead, when I think of Tom."

It was this queer sensation that caused him to lie down in the box while a play adapted from one of his books was being played.

The late Sir George Alexander one evening at our Boz Club mentioned an instance :

"Dickens was the actor's novelist *par excellence*. There is scarcely an actor of eminence, with perhaps the exception of Sir John Hare and Sir Squire Bancroft—I am not quite sure about the latter—who has not in some way been associated with the great characters of Dickens. Emery, the Keeleys, Toole, Irving, John Clayton, and of our own day, Martin Harvey and Beerbohm Tree, have all made great successes in the impersonation of Dickens's characters. Dickens himself has been a great friend to the actor. We know that he dedicated *Nicholas Nickleby* to Macready, and I have recently learnt that he was in the habit of borrowing his best waistcoats. His books were the actor's delight, but the adaptor found it a most difficult thing to give a satisfactory account of the author. Forster tells us that when 'Oliver Twist' was first produced at the Surrey Theatre, Dickens at the beginning of the First Act sat



CHARLES DICKENS READING





on the floor of a box and remained there until the curtain fell."

Charles Dickens's knowledge of things theatrical was not confined to current plays and players, he knew his Shakespeare and was familiar with the classics of the stage. The celebrated actress, Helen Faucit (Lady Martin), in her entertaining volume, *Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters*, relates the following anecdote of Dickens :

*Juliet* : "What devil art thou, that dost torment me thus?  
This torture should be roar'd in dismal hell.  
Hath Romeo slain himself?"

"The words quoted in the text bring back to me an evening in Mr. Macready's drawing-room. The party was a mixed one of grown-up people and children. We had gone through many games and dances, when someone suggested the game of 'Proverbs.' 'The devil is never so black as he is painted' was selected. The questioner, Mr. Maclise, the painter, challenged me for the second word, and I had to get it into my answer. Imagine my confusion, which, alas! everyone seemed to enjoy. I was on the point of giving up as I could think of no suitable reply to bring in the word. But when the general merriment and my nervousness were at their height, someone behind my chair whispered, 'What did you say to the nurse last night, when she was keeping you in that cruel suspense?' In an instant I sprang up and said, 'What devil art thou, that dost torment me thus?' I suppose quotations were allowed, for I was applauded, and a great deal of merriment followed. I looked round for my friendly helper, and

saw Charles Dickens stealing away unsuspected by anyone, and looking as though he had casually left his seat for no especial purpose.

"When I thanked him afterwards for his help he turned it off, 'Oh, the words must have come into your head—how should I have thought of them?'

"This was the way he did his kindnesses, never so happy as when doing them."

Some of my readers, particularly those who are not old enough to realize the public interest (unparalleled in those days) which Dickens's readings aroused, may think that the interest was due more to the curiosity of seeing the famous Charles Dickens, the Man, than to the matter and manner of his performance, but any contention of this kind is brushed aside by George Dolby's published record of those readings. It was he who, acting as manager for Messrs. Chappell, had to supervise the money-taking at the doors, and he states that, whenever Dickens was announced to give dramatic readings, such as the death of Nancy, numbers were unable to find room and were turned away from the overcrowded halls. Thus proving undeniably that it was Dickens the Actor, and not Dickens the "Writer of Books," who was the draw. The excitement raised by the reading of tragedy—Dickens called his "murder" reading—knew no bounds. His fame as an actor preceded him, and his dramatic performances booked up and completed long before the other more literary readings. And we see the effect upon the actor himself was immense.

"The terrible force with which the actual perpetration of this most foul murder was described was of such



CHARLES DICKENS EXHAUSTED



a kind as to render Mr. Dickens utterly prostrate for some moments after its delivery, and it was not until he had vanished from the platform that the public had sufficiently recovered their sense of composure to appreciate the circumstance that all the horrors to which they had been listening were but a story and not a reality; but in the vigour and the earnestness with which it was delivered, it was painfully apparent to his most intimate friends, and those who knew his state of health the best, that a too-frequent repetition of it would seriously and permanently affect his constitution."

His "reading" undoubtedly resulted in Dickens's breakdown and death; he sacrificed his life for his dramatic art. Had he confined his programme to lighter pieces he might have finished *Edwin Drood*, and contributed other works to brighten the lives of his admirers.

Apropos of his lighter reading, Dolby tells a good story of their American tour:

"During the progress of this reading, I was engaged in conversation with one of my staff at the foot of the stairs leading to the hall, when my attention was drawn to a gentleman coming down the stairs in a most excited state. Imagining him to be ill and wanting assistance, I said, 'What's the matter with you?' From the accent of his reply, I concluded that he was a 'reg'lar down Easter.'

" 'Say, who's that man on the platform reading?'

" 'Mr. Charles Dickens,' I replied.

" 'But that ain't the real Charles Dickens, the man as wrote all them books I've been reading all these years.'

" 'The same.'

"After a moment's pause, as if for thought, he replied :

" ' Wall, all I've got to say about it then is, that he knows no more about Sam Weller'n a cow does of pleatin' a shirt, at all events that ain't my idea of Sam Weller, anyhow.' "

"After the delivery of this speech he clapped his hat on his head and left the building in a state of high dudgeon."

These readings were not actually readings from the work as published and read. Dickens re-wrote many passages. These were subsequently published and edited by John Hollingshead.

John Hollingshead, "Practical John," manager of the old Gaiety Theatre, and many others, had been one of Charles Dickens's young men, and always referred to his great editor as the "Master." I knew Hollingshead well in his latter years, and, as I was "on the platform" myself, he often spoke to me of the wonderful genius displayed by Dickens as a public reader of his own works, of the marvellous way in which he captivated and fascinated his audience by pure dramatic force. Hollingshead, himself a writer for Dickens before he became a theatrical manager, gave in his volume of *Readings from the Works of Dickens*, as arranged and read by himself, the following interesting comment on the novelist-actor from the literary point of view :

"Mr. Dickens's readings, or illustrations, as we prefer to call them, are running, critical commentaries upon his own works. With all the self-possession, the flexibility of voice, and the facial expression of a trained actor, it is not surprising that Mr. Dickens should be

able to cause his own creations to live and move before our eyes. Possessing all the bodily requirements, the conception of character alone is wanted ; and there is abundant evidence of the existence of this in the creative fertility of his books. No original dramatic author, no writer of dramatic fiction in the form of novels, whose characters impress their forms upon the page in their own language out of their own mouths, can fail to be in heart, mind and soul a natural mimic, or actor. Every character in Mr. Dickens's novels, drawn in the first instance from observation, must have been dramatically embodied—acted over, so to speak, a hundred times in the process of development and transference to the written page : and the qualities of voice, nerve and presence being granted, Mr. Dickens merely passes over that ground, in the face of a large and attentive audience, which he has often passed over before in the undisturbed privacy of his study. Where the pure actor's art is shown, as distinguished from the dramatic quality inherent in all character-creators, is in certain small alterations of the text of his printed book, so minute as to escape the eye of any but a critical observer, but purposely made to produce effective points."

John Hollingshead, who had seen all the actors of his time, gave it as his opinion—after hearing Dickens read—that he was the greatest actor of them all.

I was, therefore, gratified to find that my opinion coincided with Dr. Courtney's, as shown by the following reference to Dickens written three years afterwards :

" Few men were so entirely possessed as he was with the dramatic quality of human life. If he was not acting himself he was always writing dramas : he was

not a professional dramatist, but everywhere and in all seasons he was endlessly discovering the elements of comedy and tragedy in ordinary lives. If he touched on history, he wrote it from the dramatic standpoint; if he had to describe a scene, it was regarded and conceived as a wonderful picture, so to speak, for the foot-lights. The very emotions of his characters are, in one aspect of them, theatrical emotions, although in their deeper aspects they go far down into the foundations of human personality. It was in this sense above all that Charles Dickens was such an artist."

Dickens was true to his dramatic instinct up to the very end of his life—in fact, his last act was to rehearse an amateur performance—though broken down in health he was thoroughly aroused to the importance of his favourite duties. It was said of him that he anticipated the Bancrofts in the care and finish of the performances.

"He was a 'despot' and kept the company rehearsing all day."

But he was always acting, for instance: "Not long after the Staplehurst accident, when 'Boz' described all the harrowing details, as he alone could, in most graphic fashion, getting under the table and arranging the chairs so as to vividly illustrate and call up the whole incident."

As a public speaker he was supreme—he *acted* his speeches and thereby aroused his listeners as perhaps no other writer has ever done. Dickens never allowed himself to be trotted out merely as a stop-gap; although the best speaker of his day, his post-prandial efforts were comparatively few, and were well-thought-out master-





CHARLES DICKENS MAKING A SPEECH



pieces of oratory. He was never the professional—ever-willing after-dinner speaker.

In everything variety is charming, but, alas, we have many charming speeches and far too little variety. It is too much the habit to select the same speakers time after time : a man makes one good speech, and he is on the strength of it asked to make fifty. In all probability he repeats himself, particularly if he poses as a humorist : this performance becomes mechanical, the trick consists in saying the same thing in different ways. The late Earl Granville, giving some advice to a friend, who has since won the reputation of a very great speaker, said to him : “There is nothing so tiresome as the constant reappearance of the same man and the constant repetition of the same voice. Out of your toasts select one for a speech, and into that speech pour all the information, all the argument, all the eloquence, all the wit, all the pathos you can possibly scrape together, and for God’s sake, don’t make neat and appropriate speeches between every other toast. Dismiss them with a sentence. If there is a point in that sentence, so much the better ; but if not, let it be one sentence without a point.”

Charles Dickens was selected for great occasions, and into his speech he poured “all the information, all the argument, all the eloquence, and all his wit and pathos.” As I have said, Charles Dickens, in the opinion of those lucky enough to have heard the great author one of the best after-dinner speakers, both as regards matter and delivery, likened his speech to a cart-wheel. The outset was the tyre, he being the hub. From the hub to the tyre he would run as many spokes as there were subjects to be treated, and during the progress of the speech

he would deal with each spoke separately, elaborating them as he went round the wheel; and when the spokes dropped out one by one, and nothing but the tyre and space remained, he would know that he had accomplished his task and that his speech was at an end. So wrote his friend and manager of his reading tours, the late Mr. Dolby, and adds: "It was my fortune on many occasions to accompany Mr. Dickens when he took the chair at public dinners or meetings, and, remembering on all such occasions his plan of action, I have been amused to observe him dismiss the spoke from his mind by a quick action of the finger, as if he were knocking it away."

## CHAPTER XVII

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

IT is difficult to explain with the pen—or so it seems to me—the reason of Chamberlain's greatness among the great Victorians. No doubt he was indebted to his godfathers and godmothers for a large share of his popularity. Had he been christened Percy or Noel or Arthur he could never have hoped to live as he did in the mouths of the masses, or attain such universal familiar recognition as was everywhere accorded to "Joe"—"Our Joe" in Birmingham, "Joe" in the rest of England, and "Joe Chamberlain" all over the world—always "Joe," "Joe," "Joe"—the popular fighting politician, the beloved, one of ourselves.

"Our Joe," in the great Midland city, had all kinds of popular qualities associated with his name of Joe. William Ewart Gladstone never became "Bill," and never became so popular as "Joe." The name of Gladstone almost became a fetish, worshipped by his Liberal and Radical supporters, though of course a large—a very large—mass of English people had no respect for him. A large mass of English people detest the very name of Chamberlain; but he was always "Joe," even to them, and however much political opponents railed at Joe, they were compelled, in spite of themselves, to admire his thoroughly English characteristics, his spirit

of "never surrender," his British independence and pluck.

Having said that, one has said all he can for "Joe."

As a caricaturist, I may go further and add that, after all he owed to the luck of being a "Joe," he owed his popularity in pictures, to a great extent, to his eyeglass. Strange as it may seem, Chamberlain was not easy to caricature. Sir Francis Gould manufactured a Chamberlain, and was so persistent that the public accepted the type. In the same way, I had previously manufactured a Grand Old Man, and the public accepted it as a caricature of Gladstone. I was not a Gladstonian, any more than Gould was a follower of Chamberlain, but I was able to see the good in the man, and to find quite enough to point to the ridiculous without doing any injustice.

A caricature, a real cruel satire, really biting and often repeated, and widely known, can only be done by a caricaturist who dislikes and has a contempt for his subject. Sir John Tenniel had a contempt for "Dizzy," and how he revelled in his caricatures of him! My contempt for politicians as a whole is so great that my only real pleasures are my caricatures. I never attempted, for obvious reasons, to depict Gladstone as Tenniel had depicted "Dizzy," or Gould, Chamberlain, as a scoundrel, a trickster, and a charlatan of the most contemptible type. I have not spared others, but the Grand Old Man's collars, like Chamberlain's eyeglass, sufficed for my purpose. I may add that the eyeglass of Joe Chamberlain, to say nothing of the inevitable orchid, saved him from other caricatures which might otherwise have been accomplished by various artists.

I do not infer that Gould's Chamberlain was a better portrait than the attempts of other draughtsmen—I mention it as the more cruel, and, therefore, the more acceptable to the periodicals; but Chamberlain was not an easy man for a successful caricature—meaning by that, a mere superficial caricature. In the hands of a caricaturist who really disliked him, however, there was much in his face—or rather in his mind and his record—for the artist to seize upon, by means of which, if he could not be made funny, as was “Dizzy,” his face could be rendered—and was done most successfully by Gould—a personification of evil.

It was impossible to make Chamberlain heroic. From the tuft of hair on the top of his head, to the point of his toe, he was in the artist's eye the very antithesis of all that is picturesque and heroic. His nose alone made it impossible; but his whole figure, dress and general bearing were those of a pushful shop-walker in a provincial establishment. What sculptors will make of him it is impossible to say. The D.C.L. robes cover a multitude of commonplaces, and caricatures of men, such as the late Sir Richard Temple, could never have been made to appear heroic in bronze even by the aid of robes of office. But Temple had a fine nose and a boldly shaped beard; Chamberlain, at his best, had no suggestion, even in his expression, to aid the sculptor. Therefore, if any impressive statue of him is to be, or it may have been already erected, it will be a worse caricature of the real man, through being ridiculously heroic. Showing, with truth, the man as he really was.

I have been in Mr. Chamberlain's company at private little dinners. Perhaps the most interesting occasion

was in Birmingham, a week or so before war was declared with Kruger. The eyes and ears of all the world were turned to Birmingham, to learn what would be the next move of Mr. Chamberlain. Would there be peace, or war, to-day, next month, or never? That particular week the excitement was at fever heat. We were twelve or fifteen friends dining on a Saturday night at a private little dining club in Birmingham—myself the only outsider and the only one not accustomed to call Chamberlain “Joe.” Chaff, good humour, unguarded and brutally frank criticisms of political friends and opponents, was the order of the evening. “Our Joe” was at his best. He drank a whole bottle of champagne and a bottle of port afterwards, and smoked long, strong cigars. Perhaps one and only one remark he made I may repeat. I never forgot it.

“It is to be war, Joe,” said a relative of his, “if you are sending out six (or perhaps it was sixteen) thousand men.”

“Mark my words,” replied Chamberlain, “over in six weeks; absolutely over; and Kruger on his way to England. The troops are wanted for something far more serious, further away; they are going to take this job on, on their way!!!”

Not so very long afterwards, the Fiscal Reform question was sprung upon the country, and some of those dear friends of Chamberlain who were around that table became his political opponents.

In endeavouring to analyse the characteristics of Joseph Chamberlain, one must not forget the fact that, according to all accounts, he was not a grateful man. He did not remember the services rendered to him, and he acted towards those who at least deserved polite



'recognition with direct rudeness. A friend of mine summed him up—I think pretty fairly—as follows :

“That at times there breaks out in Mr. Chamberlain a vein that is not lovely to look upon is true enough. Shall I call it self-assertion, arrogance or vulgarity? He has not an instinct for the best. For one thing, he is not a 'Varsity man—you could tell as much after five minutes' conversation with him. He is a great reader, but not, I suspect, of the best literature. His library at Highbury is well thumbed, but it is a 'business' library. I do not say all this by way of reproach ; it can be no reproach to a man of Mr. Chamberlain's achievements and occupations that his artistic senses have become somewhat blunted. But it may serve to explain some deficiencies in his character. For instance, when pronouncing John Bright's funeral oration, he told the House that Birmingham had never allowed Mr. Bright to pay his election expenses. Honour Mr. Bright and praise him, but do not forget that Birmingham paid his expenses. It would have occurred to few men to make such an observation at such a time.”

Had Chamberlain managed and dominated England as he did Birmingham he would have been the greatest politician the world had ever seen. As it happened, he lived and died a provincial. His politics, aspirations and performances were provincial, his manner and his appearance were provincial—provincial in the best sense, for Birmingham grew under his directorship to be perhaps the model provincial city. But Birmingham is not England.

His Imperialism was provincialism—pure Brummagem. Disraeli's was Eastern, grand, artistic and subtle. Cham-

berlain was a very good imitation of it—but it was Brummagem, not the real thing. Birmingham goods, however good, exported, are not like the true Eastern art imported. The result, Disraeli's a grand success and Chamberlain's a failure—not absolutely, but comparatively speaking.

It is perhaps gross sacrilege to liken either of these great men to common thieves. But I would venture to suggest that "Dizzy" owed his final triumph to what thieves call working single-handed, whilst Chamberlain was the head of a remarkably intelligent and faithful—if sometimes unscrupulous—political gang.

Unscrupulous? Yes—and I shall give you an instance, told me by one of the Chamberlain Birmingham Committee, who with Schnadhorst "saw the thing through." Chamberlain was to be attacked—politically, in Birmingham, his own stronghold, by Lord Randolph Churchill, supported by Sir Stafford Northcote and other leading Tories of that day. Chamberlain called his henchmen together and said, "This meeting must not take place; if it does it must be rendered abortive—legitimately—if not—well, I leave it to you, gentlemen, but it must be upset." It was. History records the disgraceful scenes at Aston; the pulling down of the wall, after bogus tickets had failed, the scene of riot and ruin of the grand old buildings, and the scandal of the whole thing. Well, as my friend informs me, the gang of bullies and prize-fighting roughs who led the disturbance were, after the disgraceful affair was over, each given five pounds, on condition of their signing a paper declaring that they were hired by the Conservatives to riot and not by the Chamberlainites! These men



JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN



subsequently sold that information for another sum of money to the heads of the Tory party, but these papers only reached St. Stephen's on the night of Chamberlain's reply to the attack of Randolph Churchill and others. And when—Chamberlain—stood at the table in the Commons and waxed eloquent over the innocence and virtue of his friends in Birmingham, he had in his coat-tail pocket this damning evidence of their trickery and treachery. What his feelings were I know not, no one ever knew what Chamberlain's feelings were. He never gave himself away. A great friend of his once said that Chamberlain declared that he never gave himself away. "When I am in a tight corner, apparently overwhelmed by political disaster, I come up confident and smiling. People always take a man at his own valuation." So splendid was he in that awkward crisis that he immediately sent a private telegram off to his friends in Birmingham—"I have smashed Churchill."

All is fair in love, war and politics, but a lie is a lie, and no less a lie if it is a political one. This, however, is digression. I have not sat down to write a criticism of Joseph Chamberlain as a politician—nor am I qualified to attempt even an "appreciation" of the man. My contribution to the mass of Chamberlain literature does not aim at being literature or anything approaching it, but a chat on that great man's personality, as an artist who, throughout the period of the rise and—dare I say—fall of Chamberlain, devoted a considerable time to the study of politicians in general and of Joseph Chamberlain in particular.

When did I first see him? Let me think. It was years ago. When quite a young artist I was sent to

Birmingham by the *Illustrated London News* as their special artist during an exceedingly interesting political demonstration, in which Mr. Gladstone was the principal figure, and Chamberlain, then at the height of his provincial, if not of his political greatness, was a good second. And the chief characteristic of Chamberlain that day—and one that never failed to arouse my admiration—was his supreme coolness, his confidence in himself and his indomitable courage and pluck.

For some reason on that eventful day in Birmingham "Our Joe" was very unpopular with a great section of the vast multitude thronging the streets of the town he had ruled so well. I never inquired the cause, or if I did I have since forgotten—some municipal difference probably. Anyhow the result was this. "Our Joe" was hissed through the streets on his way to the station to meet Mr. Gladstone—loudly and angrily hooted and hissed. Yet he never turned right or left and he never moved a muscle of his face.

Chamberlain was not an orator, a wit, or a scholar. He was a level-headed business man, with a love for politics. He knew no fear—and, I should surmise, was never nervous, and therefore not a genius. But in one way he had a genius that is perhaps more rare than that of the highest ideals, it is the genius that I have elsewhere heard defined as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." He did not take pains to be a great speaker, but he was a marvellous debater, and although he could not mesmerize an audience as Bright with his silvery voice, or as Gladstone with his earnestness, he succeeded by sheer self-confidence. In Joe he pinned his faith, and if Joe fell then Chamberlain knew himself doomed.

course of my lengthened experience of the House of Commons, few have been more interesting to observe than those by which these boxes have been affected. Naturally the orators of the present day, who care little for dramatic effect, get less out of the table and the boxes than did most of the distinguished men mentioned in the Victorian era. It is chiefly the orators of the past who helped to give the significance indicated to these valuable "properties." Disraeli, however, simply treated them with contempt, as he showed when, in his neat but careless phrase, he stigmatized the table of the House as "a substantial piece of furniture." Disraeli never seemed to be on very good terms with the boxes, for when he stood at the table in the attitude which was so familiar to habitués of the House, that is, with one hand under his coat-tails, he was wont with the other to place merely the tips of his fingers upon the lid of the box, just as if he thought it wanted dusting.

Disraeli pushed his way into public life by the force of his acting. He dressed for the part as if he were going on to the theatrical stage, "with hair pomaded and perfumed and arranged in glossy black ringlets. The youngster wore rings on his fingers, over white gloves, and glittering waistcoats that made him conspicuous among London's most arrant dandies. It was by his oddities of dress he first attracted attention; this once gained, he was confident of holding his audience. He was fond of entering a drawing-room in a satin waistcoat, frilled shirt, green or purple trousers with gold stripes, and the rest of his costume of like grotesqueness. He looked like a freak, but he talked like an oracle."

Disraeli's first attempt to speak in the House of Commons was brought to a premature end by the shouts of ridicule. But before he sat down he made the following memorable prophecy: "Now, Mr. Speaker, see the philosophical prejudice of man. I would certainly gladly hear a cheer even though it came from the lips of a political opponent. I am not at all surprised at the reception which I have experienced. I have begun several times many things and I have often succeeded at last. I will sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me."

"Dizzy" was laughed at very early in his career. An American traveller, who, it was said at the time, ill repaid the hospitalities he received, by his offensive comments upon English society, thus describes the young, fashionable author: "Disraeli," he writes, "has one of the most remarkable faces I ever saw. His eye is black as Erebus, and has the most mocking, lying-in-wait sort of expression conceivable. His mouth is alive with a kind of working and impatient nervousness, and when he has burst forth, as he does constantly, with a perfectly successful cataract of expression, it assumes a curl of triumphant scorn that would be worthy of a Mephistopheles. A thick mass of jet-black ringlets falls over his left cheek almost to the collarless stock, while on the right temple it is parted and put away with the smooth carefulness of a girl's. Patent leather pumps and a white stick are the characteristics of this actor."

In theatrical phraseology, Disraeli's power as an actor lay in his "reserved force." His power lay not so much in what he did, but what he did not do. When he acted it was his safety—his intonation, his little tricky



mannerisms that impressed his spectators. In this respect one might compare him with another great actor and call him the Irving of politics.

Disraeli, like all other actors, knew the value of a long pause before making a point; he also knew the art of making his most telling *bons mots* with an "affectation of fatigue which made them seem so natural." It is said that "he made his points chiefly with apt alliteration's artful aid, though he also used a cough and a pocket-handkerchief."

Oscar Wilde, when also young, unsuccessful and almost unknown, followed the example of young Disraeli. "It is not every man who has the strength of mind to make a laughing-stock of himself in the eyes of London," writes Mr. Sherard, the biographer of Oscar Wilde, but forgets to note that he was both in dress and acting only following in the steps of the great genius Disraeli.

The ordinary Englishman does not understand eccentricity. Eccentricity in an Englishman spells ruin; to anyone of foreign extraction or name it spells fame or fortune, and sometimes both. Disraeli in politics, Whistler in art, Paderewski, and before him Paganini, in music: we have had others in the pulpit, on the stage, as authors, scientists, humbugs and social successes; but they are never English. It was an Eastern flavour associated with Disraeli, that something uncanny in his appearance, in his tactics and in his power, that, after first resenting it, we finally worshipped. Disraeli himself hated the commonplace and never did anything in a common way, and when the common-sense, commercial everyday Englishman in the person of W. H. Smith was doing his best to support his chief, Disraeli, it is said,

would remark, "I never can remember if the man is H. W. or W. H."

Disraeli's epigrams and telling phrases would fill many pages. Two of the most famous found in his public speeches he made within a few days of each other. After the Berlin Conference, in which he had played such an important part, Lord Beaconsfield was at the zenith of his fame, with a Continental reputation equal to that of Bismarck's. He had risen in his own country to be the most popular of politicians, a fact time has emphasized, proving that his popularity was genuine and lasting. His return to England was the occasion of more enthusiasm than was ever shown to a statesman by the public. At Dover, at Charing Cross, and at Whitehall, huge crowds assembled and cheered; as soon as he reached his official residence in Downing Street he was obliged to make a speech to the crowd below. It was then he used those famous words: "Lord Salisbury and I have brought you back peace, I hope, with honour," words which were never forgotten. Shortly afterwards a tremendous banquet was given to him and Lord Salisbury by the Conservative Members of both Houses of Parliament, in the Riding School at Knightsbridge (July 27th, 1878), in honour of the diplomatic triumph at Berlin. Lord Beaconsfield had suffered the virulent and spiteful attacks of Mr. Gladstone for years. A short time before, speaking at Oxford, Mr. Gladstone said of Lord Beaconsfield, "My purpose has been to the best of my power, day and night, week by week, month by month, to counter-work what I believe to be the purposes of that man."

In reply, Lord Beaconsfield seized the opportunity

to sum up his old opponent Gladstone in the following never-to-be-forgotten words: "I was astonished to learn that the convention of the 4th of June has been described as an 'insane' convention. It is a strong epithet. I do not myself pretend to be as competent a judge of insanity as my right hon. opponent. I will not say to the right hon. gentleman, *naviget Anticyram*, but I would put this issue to an English jury: which do you believe most likely to enter into an insane convention, a body of English gentlemen honoured by the favour of their Sovereign and the confidence of their fellow-subjects, managing your affairs for five years, I hope with prudence, and not altogether without success, or a sophistical rhetorician, inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity, and gifted with an egotistical imagination that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign an opponent and to glorify himself?"

Unlike Mr. Gladstone, who was at his worst in obituary orations delivered at the table of the House, Disraeli was at his best. "Acquitting himself of his task with the usual delicacy of sentiment and good feeling which were always on these occasions so conspicuous," he on the 1st of May, 1865, moved the House by his eloquent tribute to the late President of the United States, President Lincoln, assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, in Lord's Theatre, Washington. In illustrating the matter of the speech, suffice it to quote one passage: "Under any circumstances we should have bewailed the catastrophe at Washington; under any circumstances we should have shuddered at the means by which it was accomplished. But in the character of the victim, and

This unfortunate slip was soon forgotten, as indeed are all other attacks upon Disraeli. Fancy anyone to-day believing in Carlyle's description of this leader: "A superlative Hebrew conjuror, spellbinding all the great lords, great parties, great interests of England, to his hand in this manner, and leading them by the nose, like helpless, mesmerized, somnambulant cattle."

When Disraeli was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and made the famous defence of his Budget, the subsequent defeat of which threw out the Derby Government, he was in his most sarcastic and aggressive mood. It is said that he "was never so happy, both in his tactics and his eloquence, as when fighting a losing cause." In this extraordinary speech he referred to Sir John Graham as one "whom I will not say I greatly respect, but rather whom I greatly regard." He reminded Sir Charles Wood that "petulance was not sarcasm, nor abuse invective," and wound up by twitting the Opposition "that as a coalition they would form a government, but unless public opinion be with it, it could only be 'the baseless fabric of a vision.'"

Mr. Gladstone sprang to the table and seized the box with both hands, "raging out with pent-up fury." "I begin by telling the hon. gentleman, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, before I come to the question whether he knows his business or not, that there are some things he has yet to learn." (Opposition cheers.) He then proceeded, amid much interruption, to lecture Disraeli on the licence of language he had used, and the phrases he had applied to the characters of public men. Continued interruptions prevented his sentences being finished. "Notwithstanding the efforts of some gentlemen, in remote corners of the House, who are availing

themselves of the darkness, I tell them they must bear to hear their Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is so free in his comments upon others, brought to the bar of this Committee, and tried by those laws of decency and propriety which he——” The rest of the sentence was lost in the cheers of the Opposition. But Mr. Gladstone banged his clenched fist on the table, and after his lecture on Parliamentary etiquette, proceeded to pulverize the Budget proposals of Mr. Disraeli.

The last speech which Disraeli delivered in the House of Commons was on August 11th, 1876, in reply to an attack upon the Government policy in the East. As he stood, with his fingers touching the despatch box to support him, he delivered his last words over it : “What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England, nor will we agree to any step, though it may obtain for a moment comparative quiet, towards a false prosperity that hazards the existence of that Empire.” As he finished his peroration amid cheers, no Member, except perhaps a few intimate friends, had any idea it was the last occasion on which they would cheer him, as they had done for well-nigh forty years in that chamber. His departure was in keeping with the strange Eastern, mysterious fascination which had, all through those forty years, made him the most interesting figure in that House. “Mr. Disraeli was in the popular chamber to a late hour ; he made no reference to the new honours about to be conferred upon him ; he took his seat and entered into the conduct of public business as if no change was about to take place in his life ; and when he had ended quietly took up his hat and walked out of the House, never to return again as a Member.

The next morning it was announced that Mr. Disraeli had been raised to the peerage as Earl of Beaconsfield and Viscount Hughenden."

That Disraeli, brought up in the Count d'Orsay school of foppishness and courtliness, should act the part of the courtier to perfection seemed but a logical conclusion, and was particularly marked in his intercourse with Queen Victoria. It was no secret that the Queen did not like Gladstone; his written communications to her were coldly official, his manner was pedantic. Disraeli, on the other hand, not only played the part of her chief statesman as a statesman should, but fascinated her with his cleverness, to say nothing of his political ingenuity. It was Disraeli who created the Queen Empress of India. Gladstone never created anything, his policy was destructive, not constructive. He was a Little Englander, not the big Imperial expanding Empire builder, Disraeli. When Queen Victoria visited her favourite Premier, Lord Beaconsfield, the courtier-like acting was polished perfection, the grace with which he extended his arm to his Queen to rest upon, as they walked in the grounds of Hughenden, could never have been surpassed by Sir Roger de Coverley in private life or the most polished actor on the stage. Disraeli was always the courtier, though he sometimes startled his friends by his independence and originality of action. For instance, when the notorious Dr. Kenealy was returned to Parliament as Member for Stoke, the Speaker asked if there were any Members of the House present to introduce the hon. Member. As "no one seemed desirous of touching pitch and becoming defiled," the "Doctor" had to appeal "in his most humble tones." He tried to argue



DISRAELI ADDRESSING THE HOUSE





with the Speaker that no such rule existed. But the Speaker merely informed the isolated Member that the practice had existed since the year 1688. Disraeli, as Leader of the House, kindly came to the rescue, and saved the "Doctor" from further ridicule. Later in the session, when Kenealy, in the House, began his ridiculous attacks upon the judges who had tried the Tichborne case, he brought upon himself the Premier's contempt. Disraeli covered the convict's champion with ridicule: "The hon. Member (Dr. Kenealy) comes, this evening, with all the advantages of a practised actor, who, after the provinces, comes to seal his reputation on the metropolitan stage." The result of the debate caused the loudest laughter ever heard in the Commons—Ayes 1, Noes 433. The fact that the solitary Aye was Major O'Gorman's caused the laughter, and changed the atmosphere from bitterness to one of general good humour, for everything done by the popular Irish major (in Parliament) caused hilarity.

Perhaps more unkind things have been said of the Earl of Beaconsfield than of any politician of his day; not the least unfair is the statement oft repeated that "Dizzy drank." Compared with other prominent politicians of his day, and after, he was really moderate. He may have indulged in an extra glass of his favourite brown sherry at merry political meetings in the provinces—but to judge him by what one saw in Parliament he might have been a veritable Pussyfoot. One of the many absurd stories circulated about Beaconsfield, I happened to know, was a gross absurdity. I knew the man who invented it. He was a descriptive writer in the Gallery of the House of Commons, of the name of

Guinee. He contributed a "London Letter" to the *Freeman's Journal* once a week, and now and then, being hard up for material, invented his "facts." One brilliant effort to fill up his column against time was to the effect that Lord Beaconsfield, towards the end of his career, was kept alive by "champagne jelly." This "fact" was copied into nearly all the papers in the United Kingdom, and, accepted as truth, was used as a subject for caricature in the comic press and introduced into music-hall songs. To this day people refer to "Dizzy's champagne jelly." The only person who knew the truth, and kept it to himself, was the ingenious journalist, who was rewarded by a coin that represented his own name.

In my early days of Parliamentary work I made a special study of Disraeli, who had just then become the Earl of Beaconsfield, and I well recollect his very last visit to the House of Commons. It was quite early in the morning. There had been an Irish all-night sitting, one of the first that ever occurred, and the House was still sitting. Second editions containing descriptive accounts of the "Scenes in the Commons" in the morning papers were selling in the streets. The officials were worn out. The House had not had its morning cleaning, everything looked dusty, and everyone dissipated, when Lord Beaconsfield—brought to the scene of his former triumphs by his ever-faithful Monty Corry (afterwards Lord Rowton)—came into the Gallery looking the perfection of an old dandy, scented, oiled and curled. He took out his eyeglass, and, as was his custom, held it between his first finger and thumb, and with a half-amused expression surveyed the curious scene below.

He sat quite close to where I was in the Gallery, so I made a drawing of him there and then. I sold the original for a very large price, and the *Academy* comments in these words, that "the portrait was pathetic, almost tragic, and will be historical."

1837

Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, the new Member for Maidstone, maketh his first oration in the House of Commons. The verdict of one of the Infallible Prophets of the good old school on the presumptuous youth runneth as follows :

That dark-eyed fellow with curly hair,  
Who scribbles those stories for girls and boys,  
That over-dressed fop with the jaunty air,  
His books all froth, and his talk all noise,  
Is now in the House !!!! Why, the youngster's daft !  
That he "M.P." to his name should write !  
Oh, how we hooted, oh, how we laughed  
At his maiden speech, which he gave last night !

1877

The Right Honourable Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, Prime Minister of England, taketh his seat in the House of Lords. Slightly remodelled verdict of the Infallible One, now grown older, and, therefore, presumably, wiser :

A belted Earl, with a sword to sway  
More dread than Cæsar's—a royaller rule  
Than Rome's at Rome's royallest ! What ! You say  
This is young Disraeli, the scribbling fool,  
As we used to call him—well, I for one  
Will own 'twas we were the fools. You see  
The man who has done what Disraeli has done,  
Has something in him, whatever it be.

## CHAPTER XIX

### MR. GLADSTONE—ACTOR AND ORATOR

THE last selected for this brief survey of Victorians is the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone. When he retired from "practical politics" it was my intention to collect my unpublished portraits of him, together with a brilliant description, written for me by Mr. Frank Hill, then the editor of the *Daily News*.

To my surprise I discovered the subject to be of little interest to the general public, and I withheld the publication for obvious reasons. Now that Gladstone is once more restored to his position as the greatest political personality of the Victorian era, there is every reason to publish the opinion of his contemporary, the great political leader-writer.

Strangers in the Gallery, if they are really strangers and not habitual loungers who pass by that name, have one unanimous curiosity, when they have taken in the scene about them, when they have overcome their disappointment at the homely and ill-furnished apartment in which more powerful rulers than the Roman Senate govern a greater Empire than that of Rome; when they have been disabused of their impression that the Sergeant-at-Arms is the Speaker, and have had the three wigged and gowned gentlemen at the table ex-

plained; when these preliminary adjustments of the organization to the environment have been effected—their eyes with one accord look, and their tongues with one accord inquire, for Mr. Gladstone. Is he in the house? Where is he? Which is he? The absorption of interest is intelligible and inevitable. Mr. Gladstone is the most famous of modern Englishmen. But he is something more than that. He is a piece of history living and moving among us. A new generation awakening to political curiosity looks upon him with something of the feeling with which it would gaze on Chatham, or Pitt, or Fox, if some power, cheating the magic of the grave, could bring them with the habit, the movements and speech of their daily life; while Mr. Gladstone yet sits in the House of Commons, his statue might appropriately take its place with the effigies of the great Parliament men which line St. Stephen's Hall. St. Stephen's Hall is the old St. Stephen's Chapel, or rather stands upon its site—Mr. Gladstone of living men has sat in the chamber in which, from the reign of Edward VI to and well into that of William IV, the Commons have met. His voice has been heard within the walls which have echoed to the tones of Pitt and of Fox, and Chatham, as yet uncoroneted, and Walpole, Hampden and Falkland, of Pym and Wentworth, of Cecil and Bacon. He took his seat in the House of Commons in January, 1833, in the first session of the first reformed Parliament. The House of Commons was burned down in October, 1834, an event which fancy might take as symbolical as the ending of a political era. The old House had fulfilled its mission, and a new habitation was required for the new spirit which had entered into the British Constitu-

tion. Mr. Gladstone is thus the remaining link which connects through their material structures the Parliaments of the Tudors and the Stuarts, of the Commonwealth and the Restoration, of the Revolution and the Hanoverian Settlements, with the reformed and re-reformed, and once again reformed House of Commons of the present and the immediately preceding reign. No wonder the feeling with which he is regarded is a curious blending of many feelings. He seems the relic of a great past, the embodiment of the traditions of the English Parliament from the time of the Reformation to that of the Reform Bill, the link which connects the heroes and the struggles of three centuries with the strifes in which for two generations he has played a foremost part, and the troubles which an old age less fortunate than his youth and prime seems to be preparing for his country. But we are keeping Mr. Gladstone and the House of Commons and the strangers in the Gallery waiting. It is a little before question time. A perceptible stir, a turning of the heads of his colleagues towards the space behind the Speaker's chair, a slight shifting of their seats by Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley, so as to leave a gap between them, and opposite the Ministerial box on the table; and Mr. Gladstone enters, with rapid step, erect, and looking round him as in invitation of the "reception" which is as dear to actors in St. Stephen's as to actors on any other stage, and which seldom fails him. The massive head, with its eager eyes, and prominent features, and deep lines of labour and passion, seems almost to dwarf the spare and shrunken form which supports it. Mr. Gladstone is too much of a dramatic artist to have Mr. Disraeli's somewhat

theatrical weakness for walking solemnly on great occasions along the whole length of the floor from under the Strangers' Gallery in a stately "procession of one." He is not restrained by that curious shamefacedness which clung to Sir Robert Peel to the last day of his Parliamentary life, and which gave a sort of maidenly coyness to his demeanour which did not quit him till he was fairly settled in his seat.

Mr. Gladstone has the faculty noticeable in most great actors, though they may come on the scenes from some obscure and distant point, of filling the stage, as the phrase runs, and catching the eye of the spectators. An unobtrusive entrance is dramatically the most effective. That the great man should be discovered by the eyes that are watching for him is far more telling than an ostentatious obtrusion of himself. The manner in which Mr. Gladstone drops into his seat, adjusts his papers, and turns to converse with his colleagues on either hand, is so very natural as to seem almost unnatural. It suggests stage business, and Mr. Gladstone at once both to be himself and to be acting himself. This is not strange. For more than sixty years, Mr. Gladstone has spent the greatest part of his waking hours in the view and hearing of the world. He lives in the presence of the public as under the eye of his Great Taskmaster, which never slumbers nor sleeps. His demeanour in the House of Commons, his gestures and changes of his posture, and play of countenance, though not addressed to the lookers-on—that would be a blunder like that of a mugging actor—are yet shaped, and informed and controlled by the consciousness of hundreds of watchful eyes and commenting tongues. Mr. Gladstone's by-

play, when he has no direct part in the speech or business of the scene, is the result of careful study, and is worthy of studying.

The same mastery of the business of the Parliamentary stage is shown when Mr. Gladstone rises to answer questions. The courteous leaning over the table, the deprecatory or explanatory gestures, the easily and nervously inflected tones, the occasional pleasantry, rather good-humoured and jocose than humorous or witty, are models of the conversational manner in Parliament. A great actor can do not only the highest but the lowest work of his art better than others. If he had simply to deliver a message or hand in a letter, he would do it as if it had not been done before.

Garrick, as the messenger bringing the news of the advance of Bernham Wood, would draw attention from most Macbeths. Something like that is literally true of Mr. Gladstone. As he stands below the bar, with a Bill, or the counterfeit presentment of a Bill, which the House has just ordered to be brought in, or with a message from Her Majesty, and in reply to the Speaker's summons advances with it to the chair, the purely formal business is done with a grace and propriety which is not in everybody's reach, as is conspicuous when other Ministers hurry or stumble along like schoolboys advancing to their headmaster's desk to receive the reward of merit on prize-day. Another art Mr. Gladstone possesses to perfection. "She will be an actress," said Mlle. Mars of Rachel; "she knows how to listen." This is, we believe, held on the mimic stage to be the very beginning of the actor's art. In most cases, according to ordinary play-going experience, it is a beginning

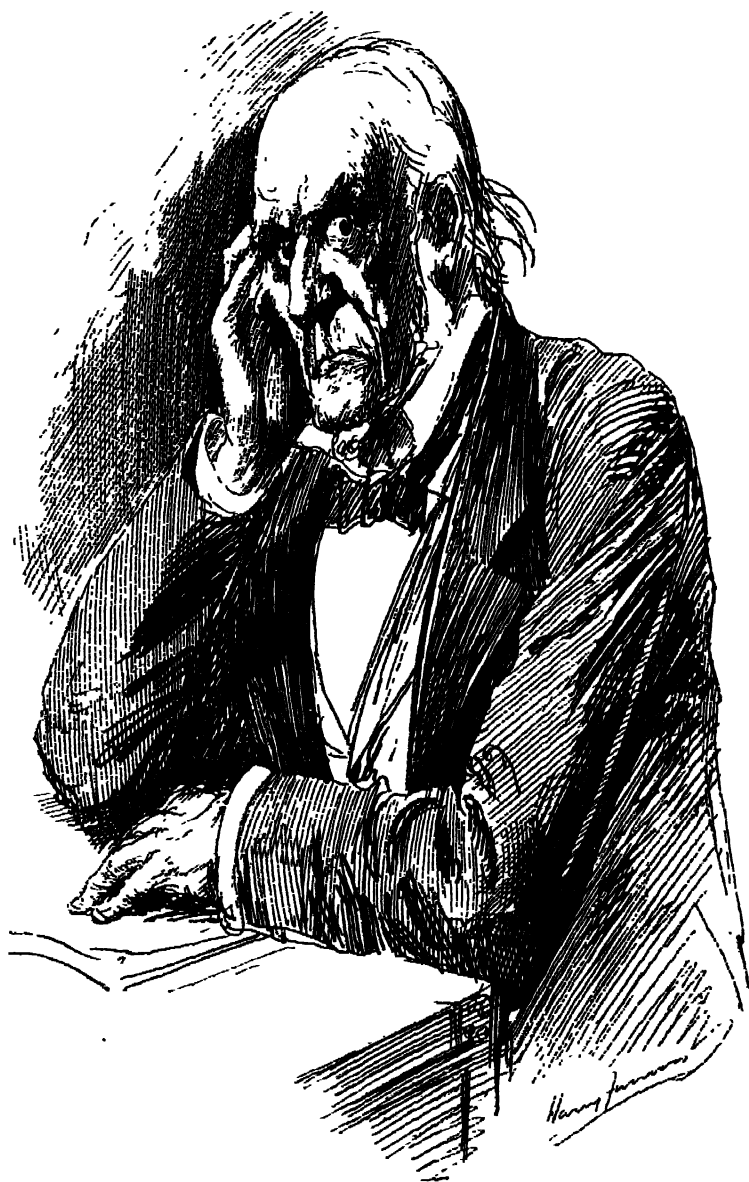


which is never made. The attendants on the scenes are usually remarkable for not attending. The humble confidants of either sex are obviously entirely uninterested in the startling or thrilling communications which are made to them. They roll their eyes round the house, much more concerned at anything which may be going on among the audience than with the sorrows, or joys, the perplexities or the projects of the leading gentleman or lady. They survey the front critically, computing possibly the take of the evening, and discriminating the relative proportions of paper and pay; or they stare into the pit or gallery trying to pick out some friend to whom they have been allowed to give a free pass, and with whom they have a tavern engagement when the curtain is down.

Mr. Gladstone is a consummate master of the art of listening. It is as good as a play to observe him. He has his various manners. To a Parliamentary beginner, he good-naturedly turns with an air of curiosity and of what must often prove embarrassing attentiveness, with hand to the side of his head, forming an improvised ear-trumpet, and his whole attitude exhibiting a pleased receptiveness. The same posture is assumed on the occasional intrusion into the debate of an habitually silent supporter, who is to be encouraged into the belief that he is making a valuable contribution to the discussion, and who is afterwards to receive the assurance of Mr. Gladstone's regret, shared, he is confident, by the whole House, that he does not more frequently give him and it the benefit of his opinions. But the real debates are, of course, with the Front Bench opposite, or with those scattered fragments of his own former

Front Bench which are collected together, under Chamberlain, in the back seats below the gangway.

Mr. Gladstone's first attitude as Mr. Balfour, let us say, rises is different. He seems to sink into himself, an unnatural quietude, more threatening to those who know him than his habitual restlessness. He is all eye and ear and concentrated attention, as hushed in grief and repose, behind his shirt collar, which seems touched up to listen, instinct with life, he waits his evening prey. Signs of uneasiness are exhibited. Mr. Gladstone begins to move restlessly. The lounging attitude in which he seems to recline unequally poised on his cervical vertebrae is exchanged for a bolt upright position, which would seem preparatory, as it was sometimes, to Mr. Gladstone's getting to his feet to administer the retort which is pressing for escape from behind the bulwark of his teeth. Usually he is content, however, to whisper it into the ears of some deferential colleague. But the period of restraint is now over, and the speech of the adversary has to be delivered to an accompaniment of *sotto voce* reply occasionally propelled like a missile across the table, to his direct address, after the fashion of shot across a ship's bows, intended to bring him to, or constraining him to change his course and go upon another tack. Ordinarily, however, Mr. Gladstone is content to carry on a private debate of his own before his colleagues in contemplation of the time when he will have the whole House for his audience. The conversation, or rather monologue, sometimes becomes so animated and contumacious, that the orator in possession stops as Pitt did, when on a now historic occasion, which shows that Front Benches succeed and resemble each



MR. GLADSTONE LISTENING



other, and were a hundred years ago pretty much what they are now, he paused until Nestor should have adjusted the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles. For the moment the "appeal to the right honourable gentleman to give me his attention" is successful. But the whispered comments begin again, and are accompanied and illustrated by movements of impatience or incredulity, gestures of surprise or indignation. Often a true description would be the speech by Mr. Balfour, the gesticulation by Mr. Gladstone. It is the triumph of political pantomime. "We understood," wrote Dr. John Donne in his funeral elegy on the death of Mistress Drury :

"We understood her by her right ; her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks and so distinctly wrought,  
That one might almost say her body thought."

These lines are not, perhaps, in the strict letter applicable to Mr. Gladstone ; but still it may be said that "we understand him by his right." His whole body debates in every part of it, from head to foot, his mobile features, vibrating and pointing finger, threatening arm, restless figure, turning now this way, now that, now erect at the table, now prone over it. To Mr. Gladstone, as he himself has said, debating is a wrestle with a single antagonist, or with a succession of antagonists, one up and down, and usually in the issue more of them down than up. His attitude, as the speech to which he is to reply draws to a close, is often that of a couchant animal, drawn together for a spring, and he leaps from his lair in a manner which enables the spectator to understand Mr. Disraeli's expression of thankfulness for the solid piece of furniture which separated them, and

which was destined to receive the resounding blows that seemed in Mr. Gladstone's intention to be aimed at the person of his antagonist. Sometimes, however, the mere fact of getting upon his legs has a chastening effect upon the orator. The nervous excitement, which while silence, a relative silence, was imposed upon him, worked itself out in gestures and shrugs and facial play, in the muscles of countenance and limb, and in half-audible comments, like the mutterings which prelude a storm that is about to break, flows in a calmer course when it finds a vent in the natural channel of continuous speech.

Mr. Gladstone rises, straightens himself, puts his hands behind his back, and folds them together, as if each were in the custody of the other, as a security against outbreak. He takes a sobering glance at the Speaker, the visible and outward sign of the inward spiritual grace of self-restraint and reciprocal courtesy, to whom by Parliamentary form the opening words of his speech are addressed, as indeed by a fiction never translated into fact the whole of every speech is supposed to be. He begins in easy and natural conversational tones, animated but not turbulent or violent, increasing in vivacity as he goes on: the erect figure becomes mobile, swaying now this way, now that, something after the manner of a preacher essaying to bring the whole of his congregation under the influence of his looks and voice. Gradually one hand escapes from the keeping of its guardian hand, and begins to play with expressive and illustrative gestures. As it returns to its old position, or rests on the table or droops by the speaker's side, the other comes forward *le même jeu*, as the French stage direction has it. On rare occasions,

when business is non-contentious, and Mr. Gladstone has only to give shape and reason to the acquiescent opinions and foregone conclusion of the whole House, or the great majority of it, the stream of his speech does not burst its banks. It flows well between them, strong without rage. Usually, however, this prelusive calm is short-lived. Ordinarily his business is not to keep the House of one mind, but to excite one side of the House against the other. Then Mr. Gladstone lets himself loose. His voice becomes loud and denunciatory. He bends across the table, thrusting his face as nearly as the space between the two Front Benches allows into the face of his antagonist, too much after the manner of a provocative street scold. His blows are literally delivered from the shoulder, not at but in the direction of his adversaries. If the opponent of the moment is in a remoter part of the House, he turns to him with gestures of distant defiance which seem to challenge him to come down and have it out, or to warn him of what would be his fate if he did. Mr. Gladstone's tone and demeanour are those of a man in a sort of frenzy, and it is impossible to witness them without pain at a certain unseemliness in the spectacle. Mr. Gladstone, instead of outliving his *sturm und drang* period, has carried it into his eighty-fifth year; the serenity and brightness of a Lapland night, in which Wordsworth saw the image of a noble age, are not his. The tumult and storm of a Walpurgisnacht are a truer symbol of his mood. It is not probable that Mr. Gladstone is carried away by a fervour which he cannot control. He is a consenting party to the passion by which he is abducted. He has instigated and arranged the seeming violence. His excitement is

voluntary. It is self-produced. It does not so much inspire as it is the creation of the tones and gestures which seem to express it. It is a common truth of psychology, and a fact which may be observed every day, that by assuming the signs of any emotion, the emotion itself is generated. The operation is reciprocal. The signs naturally express the emotion when it already exists. They can call it into existence when it is absent and give it almost any degree of force. The phenomenon known as working oneself into a passion is familiar to everybody, in some cases unhappily through inner experience, in others by common observation. By loud tones and violent gestures, setting of the teeth and knitting of the brows, a man, or perhaps more frequently a woman, can bring himself or herself into any mood of passion which he or she desire, and into any degree of that mood. Actors know this well. Before rushing on as Shylock in the Tubal scene, Macready was in the habit of swaying himself backwards and forwards with vehement gestures, endeavouring to generate the proper mental excitement by bodily disturbance. Mr. Gladstone's passion in debate is in a great degree of this physical origin. It is real, but it is produced artificially and with intention. It is a phenomenon as much of the animal as of the moral nature, as the lion is said to inspirit himself for fight by vigorously lashing himself with his own tail, and as the gorilla advances to the combat bellowing and beating his breast. Mr. Gladstone's tones, we are sometimes told, thrill and vibrate his whole person, in his more exalted moods tremulous with conviction. The words describe an actor and not a thinker. This performer is said to spar, this other to



k conviction, according as he throws himself entirely, fails entirely to throw himself, into his part. It plies also to the professional advocate who can produce himself a temporary and superficial belief in the stice of a cause which he knows to be iniquitous.

Imagination is said to be a temporary belief, and the actor and the debater no doubt, unless they are very dulously on the watch against its illusions, may surrender themselves as completely to its hallucinations as the actor or the advocate. Conviction, however, in the only sense in which it can be honourably used of this statesman, is not a thing of this kind. It shows itself not in the tumult but in the calmness of the mind. It is an affair of reason and not of passion. It is tranquil, by its very intensity. True strength, whether of conviction or of anything else, shows itself in quietness. Mr. Gladstone's excitement is the result of his strenuous efforts to work himself into a belief that he believes that in the inner recesses of his mind he is conscious of only half believing. This misgiving is at the bottom of his anger with his opponents, his vigorous rating at them. Their refusal to be persuaded reflects back upon him an uneasy and irritated sense of his own suppressed and evidently overborne doubts. "The man," said the often-quoted clergyman, "who is not convinced by these arguments, must be a villain indeed." "Villains indeed"

the category in which Mr. Gladstone places all his antagonists whom he cannot set down as fools or to whom he is unable to impute ignorance. "Dishonest or imperfectly informed" is said to be the dilemma which he charitably provides. The fact that all his ensures upon their present state of mind are censures

upon his past state of mind does not weigh with him. He dismisses his past self, after the manner of Mr. Brinnay's casuistical hero: "Get you behind the man that I am, you man that I used to be," and with more success than Martin Pelph, whose past self had an inconvenient and embarrassing way of entangling itself with his present self in a manner from which Mr. Gladstone is wholly free.

Another and not a pleasant feature of Mr. Gladstone's eloquence may plausibly be assigned to the same origin. The frequency and—the phrase cannot be spared—the levity of his appeals to the Divine name shock men of reverent mind. Mr. Wordy, the great historian, thought that Providence was on the side of the Tories. The much greater Mr. Wordy, the orator and statesman, affirms with emphasis and iteration that Providence is on the side of his party. God is the God of the Gladstonians, and if He has not left Himself altogether without witness among the Conservatives and Liberal-Unionists, theirs is the greater guilt for not heeding the warnings of His interpreter and prophet. Imperfect conviction dictates Mr. Gladstone's attempts to overbear his own judgment by excited declamation, and to shelter himself from his own misgivings by imputing a sinister bias to his adversaries and a kind of divine mission to himself. The inner assurance is wanting, and its place is supplied by these outer proofs, which involve, of course, an enormous begging of the question.

Another characteristic of Mr. Gladstone's language, his exuberant verbosity, admits in part of the same explanation. His word-spinning weaves for him a robe



MR. GLADSTONE LEANING OVER BOX ON TABLE



in which he hides himself from himself. Clear conviction and steady purpose express themselves in brief and lucid speech. Tacitus's celebrated description of eloquence, as rendered in Pitt's almost equally celebrated translation of it: "It is with eloquence as a flame, it requires fuel to feed it, motion to excite it, and it brightens as it burns," does not apply in its last clause to Mr. Gladstone's oratory: it does not brighten as it burns. The light-bearing and the heat-bearing rays of the sun are different, and in proportion as the heat is greater, the light is less, while the converse holds good. Mr. Gladstone's oratory is calorific, as Mr. Balfour's is essentially circumforaneous: "*Ex fumo dare lucem*" might be the motto of the one; "*Re luce dare fumum*" that of the other. The scale of Mr. Gladstone's sentences is, however, only on the scale of his speeches. Whatever his rank among the masters of Parliamentary eloquence, he has never had, and probably never will have, any rival as a master of largiloquence. After one of the elder Pitt's speeches, he was saluted by the people outside, as he left the House, with enthusiastic cries of "Three hours and a half." "Three hours and a half." Lord Chesterfield narrating the incident in a letter to his son *avec empressement*: "It is impossible for a man to speak well for three hours and a half." Modern criticism, debauched by bad examples, would, we fear, be inclined to make a change of one little word in this sentence, and would say: "It is impossible for a man to speak well in three hours and a half." Mr. Gladstone's long-speaking is the result of a circuitous and involved habit of mind. He does not approach his subject in a direct line, but winds about it in strange circumgyrations,

threading endless mazes though not lost in them, and approaching the goal as to mark the fact that he aiming at. Traversing so much more ground than necessary, he is perforce longer in getting over it than speaker would be whose single purpose was himself get, and to carry his hearers by the shortest path and with the least loss of time to their journey's end. Here we may, without, perhaps, unduly straining the interpretation, attribute Mr. Gladstone's roundabout courses a roundabout habit of mind, indisposed to face his matter directly and to take the shortest cut to it, but preferring to creep towards it, along wandering by-ways. This defect has grown upon Mr. Gladstone as the garrulity natural to age has been added to his aboriginal sin long-windedness. It is amusing, by the way, to find Mr. Gladstone in his *Studies of Homer* censuring Priam for being in his old age prone in war-time, as before in peace, to speak too often and too long, at least in the opinion of younger members of the Trojan assembly.

Ὁ γέρον αἰεὶ τοι μῦθοι φιλοὶ ὧ κριτοὶ εἰσιν  
 ὧς ποτ' ἐπ' εἰρήνης. (Il. II. 96.)

The argument from verbose and involved speech to the lack of clear and definite opinion, and from passion to the want of reasoned assurance of truth, though morally content is not in itself demonstrative. Conviction, however, to parody Chatham's remark, is a plant of slow growth in aged minds. It is a plant still more slowly eradicated. When we find a man of eighty years throwing away to-day the opinions which he professed yesterday, and ready to throw away to-morrow those which he professes to-day, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that he does not know what it is to be really

ininvincible of anything. Caprice or a convenient opportunism may impose themselves upon him as openness of mind, and obstinate self-will may pass itself off as steady belief.

Mr. Gladstone's convictions are those of an earnest and imaginative actor, who for the moment, in the character which he assumes, has the conviction with which on one day Salvini as Othello springs at the throat of Iago, and on another day the conviction with which Iago he spins his webs of intrigue round his dupes.

Mr. Gladstone's own theory of oratory throws more light, we are disposed to think, upon his own characteristics as an orator, than upon the art of which he has been the most successful practitioner of the past generation. The following passage occurs in his *Studies of Homer* (Vol. III, p. 107) :

"Poets of modern times," he says, "have composed great works in ages that stopped their ears against them. *Paradise Lost* does not represent the time of Charles the Second nor *The Excursion* the first decade of the present century. The case of the orator is entirely different. His work from its very inception is inextricably mixed up with practice. It is cast in the mould offered to him by the mind of his hearers. It is an influence principally received from his audience, so to speak, in vapour which he passes back upon them as a flood. The sympathy and concurrence of his time is with his own mind joint author of his work ; he cannot follow or frame ideals, his choice is to be what his age will have been, what it requires in order to be moved by him, or not to be moved at all."

It might be fanciful to trace in these words Mr

Gladstone's own conscious *Apologia pro vita sua*. But probably in those deeper and subconscious regions of the mind, in which, as in subterranean springs, lie the real sources of character, it had a self-excusatory origin. We venture to pronounce it an ignoble and untruthful view of the orator's art and function. If it does not convert him into a demagogue it is because he is not demagogued, if one may be allowed to coin a word. He is not *δημαγωγός*, but *δημαγωγούμενος*.

This is not the place to discuss Mr. Gladstone's theory of the relation of the poet to the age in which he lives and of which, according to Mr. Gladstone, he may be entirely independent. We may leave him to settle that question with M. Taine, only remarking that he seems to confound the time of Charles II with the Court of Charles II, and reminding him that there were elements in the former which were not represented in the latter and of which Milton's poem was the ennobled embodiment. So with the "excursion" and its relation to the first decade of the present century. The fact is that every great work of art, and not merely great oratoric achievements, are the joint productions of the author and of the age in which he lives. It depends on himself what are the elements which he will select from the time in which he lives. According to his choice or character he will be a Milton or a Dryden; he will write "excursions" or "Don Juans." The same freedom of choice is left to the orator, and the noblest and most durable monuments of oratoric greatness have been often clothed in words of warning, rebuke, protest and contradiction, and not of sympathy and concurrence. From the time of Demosthenes, downwards to that of Mr. Bright, there



have been conquests over hostile or indifferent opinion, which they have boldly confronted, or defeats as noble as victory. There have been incidents in Mr. Gladstone's own career which are in contradiction with his theory and general practice. It is not necessary for an orator to have the sympathy and concurrence of his audience or his time, but he must have its respect. It is not necessary that he should follow it: he may leave it. Instead of being its slave he may be its master. It is not true that he must be what his age will have him: he may go far to make his age what he would have it. He may be a piece of Parliamentary mechanism, a condenser for converting into water what it receives as vapour, originating nothing and giving back in one form only what it has received in another. But he may be more than this. In Mr. Gladstone's view the orator is simply an echo. He may be a voice, he may be only an interpreter, but he may also be an originator. Mr. Gladstone holds good only if oratory is conceived simply as an instrument of personal ambition, of popular or Parliamentary centreship, as a means of winning place and power.

This explanation throws light on the limitations of Mr. Gladstone's oratorical faculty. There is nothing of direct vision in his speeches. He does not, like Demosthenes, march with rapid steps straight onwards to an object which he sees clearly before him, levelling the obstacles which he finds in his path. Mr. Gladstone is guided rather by a delicate sense of touch than by sight. His oratory reminds one of a man feeling his way guided by an exquisite tactile sensibility through tortuous passages and a crowd of objects over which it surely seems that he must trip, which by the mere atmospheric

pressure which they convey or interrupt, warns inflexibly of their presence, and enables him to keep clear of them. This physical phenomenon, which everyone must have noticed in persons blind from birth, has its counterpart in Mr. Gladstone, who from the moment of his political nativity has been blind to principles. This, use his own metaphor, which had a deeper truth than I saw, or would allow, is the practised Parliamentary hand and not the clear and single eye, full of light. His involved and circuitous sentences, swaying now this way now that, turning in upon themselves, trying as it were first one path and then the other, and apparently, when they begin, leaving himself as much in doubt how and where they will end as his hearers are, are characteristic of this habit of mind. Mr. Gladstone's oratory has been described with some truth, but more indulgence, than that of a man thinking aloud. A better phrase, perhaps would have been "inventing as he goes on." What however, does even the politer description imply? It means that the speaking and the thinking begin together, that his language is not the outer and visible symbol shaped by causes superior to the accidents of the moment, of long-matured inward convictions, but the hastily caught-up vesture with which the nakedness of new suggestions is clothed. Hence results that remarkable poverty of his speeches in everything which can be called thought, and in those felicitous expressions which remain the permanent embodiment of some idea, those aphorisms which take their place, like the best lines of the best poets in our language, and become a part of our literature. Of these the richest legacy that any orator has bequeathed to any nation is to be found in the speeches of Burke. But at intervals they relieve and

refresh like oases the long desert tracks of the harangues of much inferior. Lord John Russell in his best moods is an example whose rooted convictions have had time to burst into the appropriate foliage and flower. The phrases which are currently quoted from Mr. Gladstone's speeches, "advancing by leaps and bounds," "approaching within measurable distance," "outside the sphere of practical politics," "up in a balloon," "an old Parliamentary hand," have a certain felicity and currency of slang. Mr. Gladstone's eloquence, it has often been said, is to oratory, in the higher sense of the term, what improvisation is to poetry. This is almost in its terms what Byron said of Fox. The comparison, however, involves some injustice. Improvisation in poetry and improvisation in oratory do not stand upon the same level. Improvisation is the degradation of poetry or rather of the poetic form, it banishes the poetic spirit, abusing it for the display of a mechanical ingenuity, scarcely above the intellectual level of a conjuror's trick. To be able, by a process of automatic continuation and verbal association, to pour forth a long screed of rhymed and metrical sentences, more or less exactly constructed, springing from no feeling and appealing to none, is an accomplishment not much superior to the cheapjack. There are no doubt political improvisators of this kind who hold forth with an incessant dribble of words, words, words, without logical beginning, middle or end. But in another sense improvisation, so far from being the degradation of oratory, is the essential condition of one of its most useful, and common, though not its noblest forms. The orator, as Mr. Gladstone conceives and has described him, in the passage which has been already quoted from his *Studies in Homer*, is in his nature an

improvisor. His skill consists in instantaneously adapting himself to the changing moods of his audience. He is something less than the creature of his time, the product of his age, as Mr. Gladstone describes him. He is the creature of the hour and the place, and will be a different creature at another hour, and in another at another hour or even in the same place. This is true not merely of his speech as a whole, and of the period as a whole during which it is being delivered. It is true of every part of his speech, almost literally of every sentence of it, which is a new birth of the moment in which it originates. It echoes the changing feelings of its audience and becomes more highly wrought or flags, is persistent in the same mood, or fluctuates. There is a philosophical theory of the universe which resolves its continuance with a series of instantaneous and incessantly renewed acts of creation. The orator, of the class of which we are speaking, whom Mr. Gladstone's practice embodies and of whom his theory alone takes account, illustrates this principle. The creative impulse from which his speech springs sentence by sentence, is conveyed moment by moment from the varying mood of the audience to the sensitive intelligence of the orator. He is not propelled by an earnest impulse from the starting-point to the goal. He obeys a succession of impulses from without, now hastening, now slackening, now diverting his course, according as they are strained or relaxed or waver. He sees much to invigorate in them the feeling which he receives from them, in part creating the force which he obeys, and leading his audience by dint of fast-fettering them in the direction which they have indicated.







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